# Guide
# to
# Ajanta Frescoes

1200

PUBLISHED BY
THE ARCHÆOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT
H. E. H. THE NIZAM'S GOVERNMENT

3/-

# Guide
to
# Ajanta Frescoes

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1930

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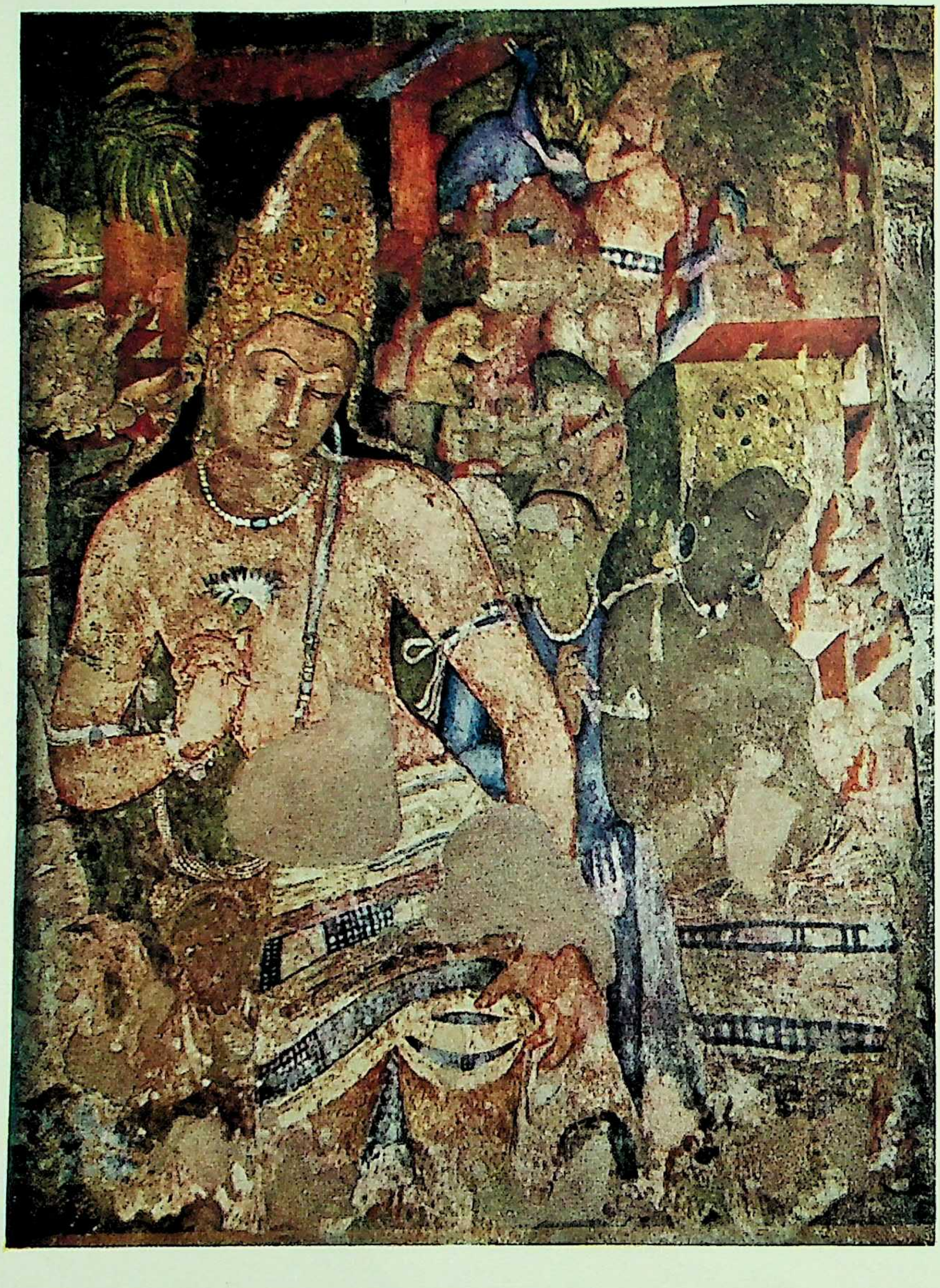

Great Bodhisattva *(Padma Pani)*: Cave I

[*Frontispiece*

## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

IN *the preface to the last edition a reference was made to the* Ajanta Album, *Part I of which is ready now; but as it is a costly publication the demand for the present Guide by the ordinary visitor is not likely to diminish. I have therefore thought it necessary to issue a third edition of the Guide.*

G. YAZDANI

*Dated the 5th April, 1930.*

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G. YAZDANI

*Dated the* 1st *April*, 1930

# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

*THE circumſtances in which this booklet was compiled are ſtated in the introductory note of the firſt edition and, as explained therein, the work was compiled as a temporary measure. It has, however, been highly appreciated by the visitor, eſpecially by the tourist, so much so that all the copies printed by us were sold out within a single season. The making of colour blocks requiring a lengthy process, the compilation of the promised comprehensive* Monograph *on Ajanta will remain a desideratum for some time. I have, therefore, thought it beſt to issue a second edition of the present* Guide, *including therein two monotone and four colour plates, which I am sure will prove to the delectation of the reader for to his artistic imagination the bare text sometimes does not appeal. The colour plates are a sample of the work which we are attempting to carry out with a view to preserving for poſterity a faithful record of the Frescoes the beauty of which in ſpite of all care on our part is likely to vanish one day. In March laſt we employed Mr. E. L. Vasey, a British expert in Colour Photography, and the reader can judge for himself how far his work has been successful in reproducing the original colour and line of the paintings.*

*In the letterpress no alteration has been made except the addition of a quotation from Captain W. E. G. Solomon's recent book the* Charm of Indian Art. *Captain Solomon is an enthusiaſtic admirer of Ajanta and I hope his views will be appreciated by the reader.*

G. YAZDANI

*Dated 20th December, 1926*

# *PREFATORY NOTE OF THE FIRST EDITION*

*THE Department has planned to publish shortly an authoritative account of the scenes painted on the walls of Ajanta Caves with suitable illustrations. As this publication will be an expensive one, it is intended to publish a summarized edition of the work for the general public at a moderate price. But the demand for a Guide to Ajanta being very urgent this brochure is issued provisionally and it lays no pretence to completeness.*

*The need of this publication has been felt all the more owing to the ensuing visit of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in December,* 1924.

# History of the Ajanta Frescoes

IN the seventh century of the Christian era Buddhism rapidly declined in India, and the shrines and sanctuaries of that cult fell into gradual ruin and oblivion. The magnificent *Chaityas* (cathedrals) and *Viharas* (monasteries) of Ajanta met a similar fate, and they were absolutely lost to the literary world until 1819, when the manœuvres of a company of British troops in the Indhyadri range disclosed their existence. In 1829 the first description of the Caves appeared in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*, and in 1843 Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Fergusson laid before the same Society an authoritative account of the Rock-cut temples of Ajanta. The members of the Society were at once impressed by the importance of the discovery, and they addressed the Directors of the East India Company with a plea for the preservation of the Caves and the execution of copies of the frescoes. As a result of their Minute of May 29, 1844, Major Robert Gill of the Madras Army was appointed to make facsimile copies of all the pictures.

Major Gill worked at Ajanta until the Mutiny (1857), and sent from time to time about thirty copies to London, where they were kept in the Museum of the East India Company in Leadenhall Street. After the Mutiny, Major Gill seemed to have resumed his work at Ajanta, for in 1863 we still find him sending home paintings and drawings. In 1866 all the paintings, except five last executed, were sent to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham for exhibition, where they perished by fire. The five paintings which escaped the fire, found their way to South Kensington and are now exhibited in the Indian Section.

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In 1872 Sir James Fergusson and Dr. Burgess urged upon the Indian Government the necessity of replacing Major Gill's copies and Mr. George Griffiths was asked to visit the Caves and report. On the strength of this report a grant was sanctioned, and in 1875 Mr. Griffiths with the help of students from the Bombay School of Arts began the work, which, with three years' intermission, lasted until 1885. The copies, numbering as many as one hundred and twenty-five, were sent to South Kensington Museum, where eighty-seven of them were completely destroyed, or damaged, by fire on the 12th June, 1885. From the residue Mr. Griffiths subsequently edited for the Government of India his monumental work—*The Paintings in the Buddhist Caves at Ajanta*, London, 1896. Fifty-six copies by Mr. Griffiths are now exhibited on the walls of the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Lady Herringham first came out to India in the winter of 1906-7, and she was so much fascinated by the frescoes of Ajanta, that she paid a second visit in the winter of 1909-10 and a third in 1910-11. The result of these successive visits is the sumptuous volume entitled *Ajanta Frescoes*, published by the India Society in 1915.

It will not be inappropriate to mention here that His Exalted Highness the Nizam's Government have always recognised their debt of reverence to the master-artists of Ajanta, and each of the undertakings described above was substantially supported by the Nizam's Government. In 1914, they also constituted an Archæological Department in order to carry out on the one hand a systematic campaign to preserve these unique treasures of Indian art from further decay and ruin, and on the other to provide facilities to students and the general public for the study of the paintings by construction of roads, building of rest-houses and publication of suitable guides and monographs. The Department, since its inauguration, has been able to conserve effectively all those frescoes which were in a state of rapid decay and also to build a large rest-house for the accommodation of visitors. The former task was by no means easy and His Exalted Highness' Government, accepting the proposal made by Nawab Hydar Nawaz Jung Bahadur, then the Secretary in charge of Archæological Department, whose interest in Indian art is well known, engaged the services of two expert Italian *restaurateurs* at very high salaries. Along with these measures the Department has also planned to publish an *Album*, containing colour and monochrome reproductions of the frescoes, based on the latest methods of photography. Part I of this *Album* is now passing through the press and it will be accompained by an explanatory text, giving an authoritative account of the paintings both from the artistic and iconographic points of view.

The story of the work at Ajanta will be incomplete if the help which Sir John Marshall has kindly given the Department at every stage is not mentioned. He not only placed at our disposal his artistic taste and technical knowledge by means of extensive correspondence, but since the creation of the Department has visited Ajanta several times to give practical hints during the progress of work.

# Notes on the Import of the Ajanta Paintings in the History of Art

*Mr. Griffiths writes—*

* * *

After years of careful study on the spot, I may be forgiven if I seem inclined to esteem the Ajanta pictures too highly as Art. In spite of its obvious limitations, I find the work so accomplished in execution, so consistent in convention, so vivacious and varied in design, and full of such evident delight in beautiful form and colour, that I cannot help ranking it with some of that Art which the world has agreed to praise in Italy. Mr. Fergusson, who visited the Caves in 1838-9, wrote : " The style of the paintings cannot, of course, bear comparison with European paintings of the present day ; but they are certainly superior to the style of Europe during the age in which they were executed : the perspective, grouping and details are better, and the story better told than in any painting anterior to Orcagna and Fiesole. The style, however, is not European, but more resembles Chinese art, particularly in the flatness and want of shadow. I never, however, in China saw anything approaching its perfection." With regard to the painted ornament, the same authority said : " It is not at all unlike that still existing in the Baths of Titus."

The reference to Chinese work in the above extract is interesting, for though flatness and want of shadow can scarcely be considered distinctively Chinese characteristics—seeing that early Italian, like other good mural decorations, is marked by these qualities—it is undeniable that in the drawing of a human eye and sometimes of the whole figure, and in many ornamental details, there is a decidedly Chinese turn. Yet, while the touch and convention are Eastern, and the decorative accessories of the hieratic art of the Farther East are used, one is not chilled by its rigid formalism. In the Buddhist pictures of Tibet, Nepal, China, Japan, Burma and Java, there is, at first sight, a marvellous unity of style, resulting in part from the use of the same symbolic and decorative materials, the same position and arrangement of the figures ; and all bear a striking resemblance to the Ajanta work. Looking at it more closely, however, it is soon apparent that the latter is younger, nearer to the original source of inspiration, and that there is a delight in nature for its own sake, and a free-handed revelry in the opportunities afforded to the artist of painting the manifold life he saw and knew. As in other early works, much of the later science of art is absent—figures are crowded into the subjects, while the constant effort to carry out the incidents consecutively, and tell the story at length, leads to a bewildering repetition of the leading figures in the same picture. Beauty is not disregarded, but it is scarcely the prime mover of the painter's brush ; there is the early lack of aerial perspective, and the parts, being delicately modelled, and not forced by light and shade, bear that look of flatness to which Mr. Fergusson has referred.

It is not surprising that paintings on stucco, all over the world, should bear a certain resemblance to each other. Egyptian tombs, Etruscan frescoes, and the painted stuccoes of Herculaneum and Pompeii, furnish examples almost identical with those of Ajanta in technical details. But as a readily available example, I venture to point to a fragment of a fresco painting by Ambrogio Lorenzatti (fourteenth century) of heads of nuns, in the National Gallery, as singularly like the Ajanta work in colour, execution, and treatment ; the forms being drawn with a delicate brown outline, and the flesh-tints and drapery flatly put in with very little modelling. The Ajanta workmanship is admirable; long subtle curves are drawn with great precision in a line of unvarying thickness with one sweep of the brush, both on the vertical surface of the walls and on the more difficult plane of the ceilings, showing consummate skill and manual dexterity. The touch is often bold and vigorous, the handling broad, and, in some cases, the impasto is as solid as in the best Pompeian work.

In the detailed descriptions of the plates, an attempt is made to identify and elucidate the subjects and persons illustrated. Meanwhile, a word may be said about the general treatment, and especially the rendering of racial peculiarities. The slenderness of the Hindus is always a surprise to the Occidental. These soft and supple forms belong to another world, and their true character seems beyond the grasp of artists accustomed to the antique and to the muscular bulk of European models. At Ajanta no prejudices in favour of a Greek ideal, and no anatomical knowledge vexed the artist's interpretation of the forms he saw. Exaggeration of the long almond-shaped eye is, perhaps, the most pronounced mannerism, while to an English observer the familiar Oriental squatting position may appear over-frequent. Hands are put in with a pretty *maniere* grace and truth of expression which, to those acquainted with Indian life, is full of suggestiveness. It is precisely thus that, to this day, supple wrists, palms, and fingers beseech, explain, deprecate and caress. The foot, however, is nearly always poorly drawn. An exaggeration of the feminine hip and breasts has ever been a snare to the Hindu sculptor, who seems to think more of the conventional phrases of poetry than of the actual form. In the paintings, however, there is more feeling for nature. Women are drawn in a great variety of positions, nude or so slightly clad that the shape is nowise concealed. Views of the back and side, seldom seen in sculpture, are constantly given; the elusive grace of the half-averted form being charmingly rendered. The draperies, too, are thoroughly understood, and though the folds, may be somewhat conventionally drawn, they express most thoroughly the peculiarities of the Oriental treatment of unsewn cloth, which, without a single stitch, pin, clasp, button, or other fastening, furnishes the most graceful, convenient and comfortable garments known to mankind.

Great pains are lavished on the correct rendering of the manifold fashions of hair-dressing. Sometimes it is frizzed in front with luxuriant ringlets, now unknown in feminine India. Or a chignon is tied at the back with a coronal of flowers over it, or large lotus blooms are arranged among its masses. Sometimes knots of hair are looped at the side of the head and adorned with flowers, while the still prevalent fashion of confining it with chains of woven wire or jewelled string, attached to elaborate ornaments of beaten work in gold and silver, is often followed. Jungle women wear rolls and bands with peacock feather tips, and no detail is traced with more care and skill in drawing than the arrangement of the various head-dresses.

* * *

*Lady Herringham writes*—

The pictures illustrate events in the life of the Prince Gautama Buddha and in the more popular of the Jataka stories, that is, the stories of the Buddha's previous incarnations, perhaps also some scenes of semi-mythological history. Incidentally they illustrate the court life and popular life of the time, as told in the romances and plays.

* * *

There are at least twenty different kinds of painting. Some pictures recall Greek and Roman composition and proportions; a few late ones resemble the Chinese manner to a certain extent; but the majority belong to a phase of art which one can call nothing except Indian, for it is found nowhere else. In one respect the composition is unlike most Chinese painting, for there is not much landscape. The figures occupy the field, often grouped in a manner which recalls the alto-relievo of sculpture. Some subjects still remain very little darkened by the smoke of pilgrims' fires or the varnish of copyists, and not much injured by the bigotry of iconoclasts ; and these are of great assistance in the disentangling of the more spoiled portions. Nearly all the painting has for its foundation definite outlines, generally first on the plaster a vivid orange red, corrected and emphasized with black or brown as the painting proceeded. The outline is in its final state firm, but modulated and realistic, and not often like the calligraphic sweeping curves of the Chinese and Japanese. The drawing is, on the whole, like mediæval drawing.

* * *

To me the art is of a primitive, not decadent, nature, struggling hard for fresh expression. The artists had a complete command of posture. Their seated and floating poses especially are of great interest. Their knowledge of the types and positions, gestures and beauties of hands is amazing. Many racial types are rendered ; the features are often elaborately studied and of high breeding, and one might call it stylistic breeding. The drawing of foliage and flowers is very beautiful. In some pictures considerable impetus of movement of different kinds is well suggested. Some of the schemes of colour composition are most remarkable and interesting, and there is great variety. There is no other really fine portrayal of a dark-coloured race by themselves.

* * *

*Mr. Laurence Binyon writes—*

The frescoes of Ajanta have for Asia and the history of Asian art the same outstanding significance that the frescoes of

Assisi, Siena and Florence have for Europe and the history of European art. The whole course of art in Eastern Asia is bound up with the history of Buddhism in its successive phases; and the student of that art finds himself continually referring back to Ajanta as the one great surviving monument of the painting created by Buddhist faith and fervour in the land which gave birth to that religion. The frescoes discovered during the last few years in Central Asia, in Khotan, at Turfan, at Tunhuang, and other sites have only enhanced the interest which the Ajanta frescoes inspire. Just as Mahayana Buddhism in its progress and triumph through those central regions to China and Japan flowed into new forms and absorbed elements from other races and other religions, so Buddhist art in the lands beyond India flowed into fresh moulds and took on a certain character of its own. The points of resemblance between the earliest and the latest Buddhist art are obvious enough. In the modern Buddhist painting of Japan the symbolism, the types, the imagery, are of Indian origin. But on a broad comparison of the Buddhist painting of China and Japan with the frescoes of Ajanta differences equally remarkable emerge. It is true that the Ajanta series represent no single effort, but a sequence spread over several centuries and embodying several styles and tendencies. Yet, in the Buddhist painting of the Farther East, as we know it, we cannot but be struck by the absence of those features and characteristics which are the chief merit and attraction of the art of Ajanta. The supreme creations of the Buddhist paintings in China and Japan belong to an art of impassioned contemplation. And the objects of that contemplation are serene compassionate figures—the figures above all of Amitabha and his spiritual son Avalokitesvara painted, so to speak, on darkness, and luminous in their supernatural grandeur. Rarely is there any dwelling on the events of Sakyamuni's earthly life: Sakyamuni himself indeed occupies a secondary position. But in the cave-temples of Ajanta we feel ourselves in the presence of an art of a quite different character for the most part. The artists of Ajanta are far less at home in the supernatural atmosphere, where celestial beings seem to float of their own essence, than in the world of men and women, of animals, of red earth, green plants, the sunshine and the shadows. The most beautiful of their paintings are taken from the Jataka stories, the legends of the earthly life of the Buddha in various successive existences. Here was opportunity for grappling with the rich complexity of life, and the painters availed themselves of it to the full. There is no reduction to formula. These men painted Indian life as they saw it; and, though we feel the glow of a religious impulse behind their creation, we are above all impressed with their intuitive discovery of the beauty in natural movement, unstudied attitude, spontaneous gesture. These are seized upon with a genius for significant, expressive form. How admirable too is their sense for the character of animals and birds, the geese, the deer, above all, the elephant!

This fresh vigour, the exuberance of life which contains with all its joyousness the capacity for deep melancholy and compassion, is the dominant impression left on me by the contemplation of Lady Herringham's beautiful copies. Paradoxical as it may seem, these frescoes, for all their high importance in the history of Buddhist painting, appear to me more, in essence, allied to Western than to Eastern art. They are, after all, the production of a race originally one with the races of Europe. And, though they are so penetrated with Indian character, with its gentleness of movement and suppleness of form, it is from painting like this, showing the same curiosity of interest, the same ardour in grappling with the visible world, the same underlying fervour of faith, that the painting of Europe has been developed since the days of Giotto and the Lorenzetti.

But it is a kind of impertinence in one who has not seen the original frescoes to write about them; and I leave it to

Mr. Rothenstein, who has seen Ajanta with his own eyes, the eyes of an artist, to record his actual impressions.

*Prof. William Rothenstein writes—*

Mr. Binyon, the most discerning student of Eastern art we have among us, is inclined to consider the Ajanta paintings less spiritual than those of the great Chinese painters. But it must be remembered that the Chinese, like ourselves, borrowed their religion from an alien civilization. The figure of its founder came to them ready symbolized, as it were, and far removed from any actual physical and social relations. They already possessed a highly developed art of their own, the character of which had grown naturally out of their own social life and mental outlook. When with the new religion they adopted the Indian formulas and symbols, they kept these separate from the ordinary practice of their art, and so developed a highly specialized hieratic quality, the rarest and most remote perhaps the art of the painter has ever expressed.

To the Indian mind Buddha and his disciples were more actual figures, with positive relations to their own social world. The places where they lived and taught were to them definite places, to which they themselves could at any moment make pilgrimages. Although at the time of the Ajanta paintings they had long formulated their materialized conception of contemplation and renunciation, the unique importance of which has never been adequately acknowledged, they had not yet crystallized it into the rigid moulds we have now come to associate, often very falsely, with Indian art. Nor was there that separation between the social and religious traditions which I have alluded to as existing in Chinese art.

It is this broad and comprehensive outlook upon life as a whole, giving to its spiritual quality a sane and normal elation to daily existence, which is so important and delightful an element in the Ajanta paintings. Here we find the artist unconsciously expressing that wise element in Hindu religion which insists upon man first living the life of the householder, providing for his children and performing the common social obligations, before he can give himself up completely to his spiritual needs. In these paintings we get a reflection of that dualism in man—on the one hand his passion for activity, his curiosity, his delight in beauty and the pleasures of the senses, his daring and adventure ; on the other his inner reaction against these very things, consequent on the unforeseen disasters and inevitable injustice and cruelties which follow on his many restless and experimental activities.

On the hundred walls and pillars of these rock-carved temples a vast drama moves before our eyes, a drama played by princes and sages and heroes, by men and women of every condition, against a marvellously varied scene, among forests and gardens, in courts and cities, on wide plains and in deep jungles, while above the messengers of heaven move swiftly across the sky. From all these emanates a great joy in the surpassing radiance of the face of the world, in the physical nobility of men and women, in the strength and grace of animals and the liveliness and purity of birds and flowers ; and woven into this fabric of material beauty we see the ordered pattern of the spiritual realities of the universe.

It is this perfect combination of material and spiritual energy which marks the great periods of art. At other times this balance is lost, and one or the other is insisted upon with too marked an emphasis. Each succeeding age tries to re-adjust the balance as it may, until at last that balance is restored, and again we get this supreme quality of proportion and unity.

* * *

So true is the psychological character of these paintings, so remarkable the delineation of human and animal forms, so profound the spiritual portrayal of Indian life, that they may still serve to-day, in the absence of contemporaneous works of the kind, to represent the culture and character, rapidly changing though they now be, of the Indian people.

*Monsieur Axel Jarl writes—*

The water-paintings in the rock-caves at Ajanta exhibit the classical art of India. That is to say they represent the climax to which genuine Indian art has attained, and they show the way to be followed by Indian artists.

They belong to different periods and represent great varieties of style and different degrees of artistic value. But in these notes only the best of them are referred to, as they are to be seen in sadly damaged conditions, especially in Caves Nos. 1, 2, 16 and 17.

## I

The colours are deeper and often purer and the whole scale of colours is far richer than in other stucco paintings of similar dimensions (Egyptian tombs, Pompeyan houses, Italian churches from the Middle Ages, etc.). Even though the many centuries may have given the rock-walls in Ajanta a harmonious veil of patina, which they did not perhaps possess fifteen hundred years ago, the combination of colours within the single groups, and in the individual figures show that the painters were guided by a highly developed sense in their blending of colours with a view to the total impression to be produced.

## II

The composition of the wall-paintings is exquisite. It is characteristic that the larger the figures are in proportion to the surrounding space, the better is as a rule the whole composition. It seems that the best artists have preferred to use the largest figures in their pictures.

The picture tells its story plainly in a manner which nobody can fail to understand. The eye is directed by the main lines of the composition towards the chief characters, which also attract our attention by their large size and by their carefully calculated position that has been given to them in the almost endless number and variety of figures.

Whenever superhuman beings, men, animals and plants are represented the three dimensions are observed with realistically executed contractions, and with true perspective in regard to lines and planes. But buildings and grounds are done without perspective, the walls being left unbroken and the plane remains undisturbed.

But however schematic and conventional these rocks and houses, gateways, pavilions, etc., look to us, they are exceedingly fitted to serve the purpose of dividing one picture from another on the same wall, of giving the setting of the picture and of affording rest to the eye in the multitude and rush of figures.

## III

The *form* is marked by a sharp and clearly accentuated outline. The contour is so true to nature and so well done, that combined with a perfectly correct volume it gives even in cases of the most difficult contractions a perfect impression of shape even when the surface is nearly monochromatic with only a slight deepening of the colours along the edges.

Although no use is made of light and shade, the effect of shape, sometimes even of relief, is secured, and the plane is preserved as a matter of principle.

This technique, which reaches its climax in a Bodhisattva figure (of more than life size in Cave No. 1), bears a striking resemblance to that of Michael Angelo. If one placed a good photograph of this Buddha head by the side of a photograph of a figure from the Capella Sixtina one might be inclined to think, if no attention were paid to the different types of the figures, that they were painted by the same master.

A further aid in the matter of expressing form the Ajanta artists have found in an extensive use of ornaments. *Karas*, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, veils, ties, slings, flower garlands, etc., are drawn with such skill, or are laid around a neck, a finger, a breast in such a manner, that the whole surface takes its form from it.

The folds of the garments, as well as their borders, in all their simplicity are drawn with a remarkably sure hand and with an astonishing knowledge of the form underneath.

If the figures are moving such ornaments are used to give an impression of the speed. There are flying figures whose rapid movements are suggested most vividly, for instance by the heavy pendants swinging out almost horizontally.

## IV

The figure-style is highly developed and testifies to a thorough study of the human body. Every stiffness, symmetry or mere monotony has been overcome. The axis of most of the figures changes several times from head to feet without any apparent disturbance of the natural poise and balance. And one meets an unlimited freedom in the choice of postures and movements. Even those that are most improbable get appearance of life and reality. A group of beings (in the vestibule of Cave No. 17) are flying on without wings—with movements so large and free and with a poise so graceful, that one has no doubt that this is their natural manner of moving about.

This perfect freedom in the painter's handling of the human body places Ajanta one thousand years ahead of all other paintings that we know. There is no exhibition of the painter's knowledge of Anatomy, nor is there—with a few exceptions—any offence against Anatomy. The Hindu racial type is simply concentrated and intensified in this art ; and thereby have been secured a gracefulness and an expressiveness in the representation of the human body, the equal of which it is hard to find anywhere.

Figures like those of " Primavera " by Botticelli may be called the sisters of some of the female figures in Ajanta (in the cella on the right in Cave No. 2).

## V

Behind those masterpieces lies a great and thorough *study of nature*. Not only the individual painter's independent efforts to master the form of nature but also an experience and a tradition that have been cultivated patiently and industriously in an artistic school. And what we find here is not only great knowledge but also much practice. Everything in these pictures from the composition as a whole to the smallest pearl or flower testifies to depth of insight coupled with the greatest technical skill. That is what makes it possible for the artist to transcend reality as he does so often to express what is the distinctive aim of all oriental art, the soul, the spiritual side of existence. He does not thereby violate the truth.

However unnatural and artificial an eye, for instance, may appear to the inexperienced observer, the *connoisseur* will discover with astonishment, that the anatomy of the eye is so well understood and so well reproduced in the drawing, that these strange and peculiarly curved lines cannot possibly represent anything else in the world except just a human eye.

A principle by which all Western artists are guided is to study nature and to learn from the antique. What has been said above shows that the ancient Hindu masters must have followed a similar way ; combining the tradition of the school with individual study and practice. If genuine Indian art is to experience a renaissance it is that same principle which must still be followed. Europe got its renaissance through learning from the Greek antique; India will get hers if she turns to Ajanta and goes to school there.

Whoever wants to serve the cause of pure Indian art will find his masters here, in whose steps he must strive to go. He will do as they did, first of all study nature to master the secrets of form, volume and movement. But then he will go to Ajanta to cultivate his sense of deep and harmonious colours, of distinct and full composition, of expressive and pleasing lines, and last but not the least of genuine Hindu figure style. As he lives and studies among their works he will catch something of their sacred fire, until in him he feels the heart vibrating while the hand draws a clear and bold line. That is why those old Buddhist masterpieces so often leave on the observer the impression of a prayer or a hymn of praise.

*Professor Lorenzo Cecconi writes—*

In the presence of any great manifestation of art, it is impossible, at first sight, to grasp its import, and so it is difficult to form an idea of its entity ; this has happened to me with regard to the paintings of the Ajanta Caves. At the very outset my first impression was one of felicitous amazement and now that I have spent some time at the Caves and I have been able to observe attentively their details, I am in a position to pass an opinion. My first impression has been that the art of Ajanta had its influence from Greek sources ; and this might even be the case here ; as many are the parallel qualities that one encounters in the paintings. My views are that as the ancient Greeks and Romans studied from actual reality so even were the artists of Ajanta undoubtedly *realistics*. This is demonstrated by the poses of the figures, by their limbs, by their ornaments around the heads and the necks, by their drapery and particularly the modality of the folds of the latter, and this even by the perfect and faithful representation of the vessels and mirrors.

The group of figures in red, in the small recess, on the right hand side of Cave II, leads one to assume that the artists first traced the design on the wall in order to have the *ensemble* of the figures, as evidenced by the fact of a total absence of expression of sentiment in them. The contours in red of the full figures and the preparation (before being painted) show that the artist sketched his design in one colour, and subsequently, having attended to the general outlines, entered upon the task of the painting. And this he did in order to avoid being pre-occupied with the double problem of the selection of pose and colouring. Several Italian painters of the Renaissance followed this system ; in fact in the *Galleria degli Uffici* in Florence there is still to be seen a canvas by the great Leonardo da Vinci prepared in this way.

The well balanced and harmonized colouring of these paintings, from a pictorial point of view, elicit great interest particularly owing to the sober use of few natural colours.

In Cave I, the colossal figure of Buddha, which is nearly immune from varnish, evinces a surprising portrayal of art on account of its pictorial qualities ; this painting in its grand outlines recalls to memory the figures of Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel ; while the clearness of the colour of the flesh, so true to nature, and the transparency of the shadows, are very like those of Correggio. The design and expression of the face are exceptionally surprising, the breadth of the technique, the interpretation of the shape of the hand made to realistic perfection, permit of a comparison with the two great artists of the Italian Renaissance ; the female figure which is on the right of the figure of Buddha presents the same simplicity and skill. The hand holding the flower is also designed with exquisite skill and elegance. The same is to be said of the other figures and details; they are executed in a keenly appreciative purity of style and form, coupled with a real æsthetic selection of colours true to nature; in fact, the predominant features are the two colours blue and red beautifully harmonizing one with the other.

In Cave XVII, the group "Mother and Child" making an offering to Buddha is of great artistic value. In these two figures the design of their heads and their expression are admirably exquisite. The poses of these heads in the direction of the figure of Buddha recall to mind that purity of form which one encounters in the schools of Umbria and Tuscany of our most eminent *Quattrocentists*. This painting, perhaps, is less developed than that of Buddha, but its pictorial qualities bring it to the first rank; in fact, its painter must have been an artist indeed, well versed in the principles of sound art; because of the fact of the perspective, of the mouths, of the eyes and of the other parts perfectly harmonizing with the whole subject, and with the heads, the hands and even the very fingers true to reality and drawn with a most precise design.

The Battle of Ceylon also is a work of art of great worth for its *ensemble* of the grandiose composition. It, somehow, bears a remarkable resemblance to the works of our great Venetian artists of the Renaissance. The group of elephants proceeding towards the centre of the scene is astonishingly realistic, more than paintings; they appear in bas-relief, so great is the chiaroscuro and so perfect their modality. In their several and various poses these animals are rendered in the most perfect form.

The Worship of Buddha in its outlines can stand comparison with the Italian painters of the *Quattrocento* (1400). The division of the painting into two compositions one above the other, was followed also by Ghirlandaio, by Angelico, Tiziano and Sanzio in " The Transfiguration," the Italian " Seicentisti " and " Settecentisti " (17th to 18th centuries) frequently followed this system of composition.

The Group of the Persian Kings mounted on their horses, surrounded by crowds, *en masse*, with contour and the dark background, recalls to memory the paintings of Spinello Artino, and at first sight, were it not for the figure of Buddha, it would be taken for *Adoration of the Magi.* The large elephant, which with its masterly lines of composition stands out in the middle of the scheme, leads one to assume that the artist felt the need of some imposing figure in order to maintain the harmony of the scene.

The entrance to Cave XVII merits to be considered as a thing of supreme artistic value. The small embellishment which adorns the upper portion is marvellous, as marvellous are the eight panels which go to make up the decoration of the said entrance. These in simplicity of form and colour bring to mind the paintings of those eminent Umbrian artists who flourished in the XVth century.

The ornamentation of the ceilings and pillars is also of great importance. It has not a consecutive order of repetition of subjects, but one different from the other ; they are so many and so various in themselves as to furnish innumerable themes for decorative art. The ceilings in particular are very rich in geometrical and figural '*Spartiti*' (panels), such as our Italian decorators of the 14th and 15th centuries used to compose.

In this stupendous religious work of art there has been no stinting of artistic powers nor of other resources, everything is blended, everything is in keeping with a great and marvellous undertaking that could speak to posterity for centuries.

I make bold to compare the Caves of Ajanta with the Sistine Chapel. Signorelli, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Rosselli combined their art to render themselves worthy of one another in creating the great Roman work that Sixtus IV, Della Rovere, had been minded to begin and Michael Angelo afterwards completed with the greatest manifestation of his art. In Ajanta the ablest artists of the Indian School spared themselves no efforts to render this marvellous group of Caves the *Monument Princeps* of India.

This is my humble appreciation of but a small part of this work of art, viz., of that which is now in evidence and which provokes the rapturous admiration of the *connoisseurs* of both the fine arts and history

* * *

*Captain W. E. Gladstone Solomon writes* *—

The Ajanta Masters use Woman as their best decorative asset with brilliant zest and extraordinary knowledge. Woman is the finest achievement of their art, and obviously its most admired theme. They cannot apparently have too much of her, and introduce her on every possible occasion whether relevant to the story or otherwise, in every possible way, but under one aspect only—that of beauty. They use women like flowers: garlands of girls surround their Rajas and their Princes, embellish their palaces, dominate their street scenes, crowd the windows of their cities, and are often painted, as in the delicious panel in the First Cave of the Queen and her maids giving alms to a mendicant, for the sheer joy of painting them, and with no perceivable literary or religious intention. When they do not weave their women into garlands, these artists scatter them as single blooms, or by twos and threes over the walls. As Apsaras or radiant Peris, they float across the porches ; as Sirens they lure the sailor to his doom ; but chiefly they shine for us as mortals, and as mortals these artists depicted them best and most often. They painted them at the toilet, in repose, gossiping, sitting, standing, always with a sort of wonder akin to awe. The Ajanta artists could adopt conventions for their Buddhas, and had their sacred symbols, and their orthodox attitudes : but their women always unconventional. They did not pose women, they simply copied their poses. They were content to learn from their gestures, to portray their natures. Woman had for them a decorative value, although too precious to be diminished by laws. She was outside the laws of art, for she made them. They learned from her. They struggled to reproduce every turn of her head, every curve of her form, every glance of her eye. She enthralled them with her airs and graces ; enmeshed them in the mysteries of her toilet, more strongly than does the Parisienne the painter of to-day. They produced tirelessly and with a discriminating knowledge her bewildering *coiffures* ; they decked her in painstaking manner with the most beautiful trinkets they could devise. When they could not paint *Her*, then they painted her pearls and ornaments all round their columns. I can think of no parallel to this frank and chivalrous Woman-worship of Ajanta. Nowhere else perhaps has Woman received such perfect and understanding homage. Even the beggar girl who asks for alms in the panel over the portal of the Seventeenth Cave is beautiful. The truth is that they could not conceive Woman otherwise. As she truly inspired them so they gave back to her in kind these graphic gifts of whole-hearted admiration. In spite of her obvious reality one feels at Ajanta that Woman is treated not as an individual, but as a principle. She is there not female merely, but the incarnation of all the beauty of the world. Hence with all her gaiety, her charm, her *insouciance*, she never loses her dignity, and nowhere is she belittled or besmirched. Everywhere in this garden of flowers we behold the full-blown rose in its pride and perfume;—nowhere the trampled lily. "Majesty and Power" invest the Women of Ajanta quite as clearly as the Mandorla of glory surrounds the Saints of early Christian Art.

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* The quotation is from Captain Solomon's latest work—
*The Charm of Indian Art, pp.* 33-35.

# Jatakas and Scenes from the Life of the Master

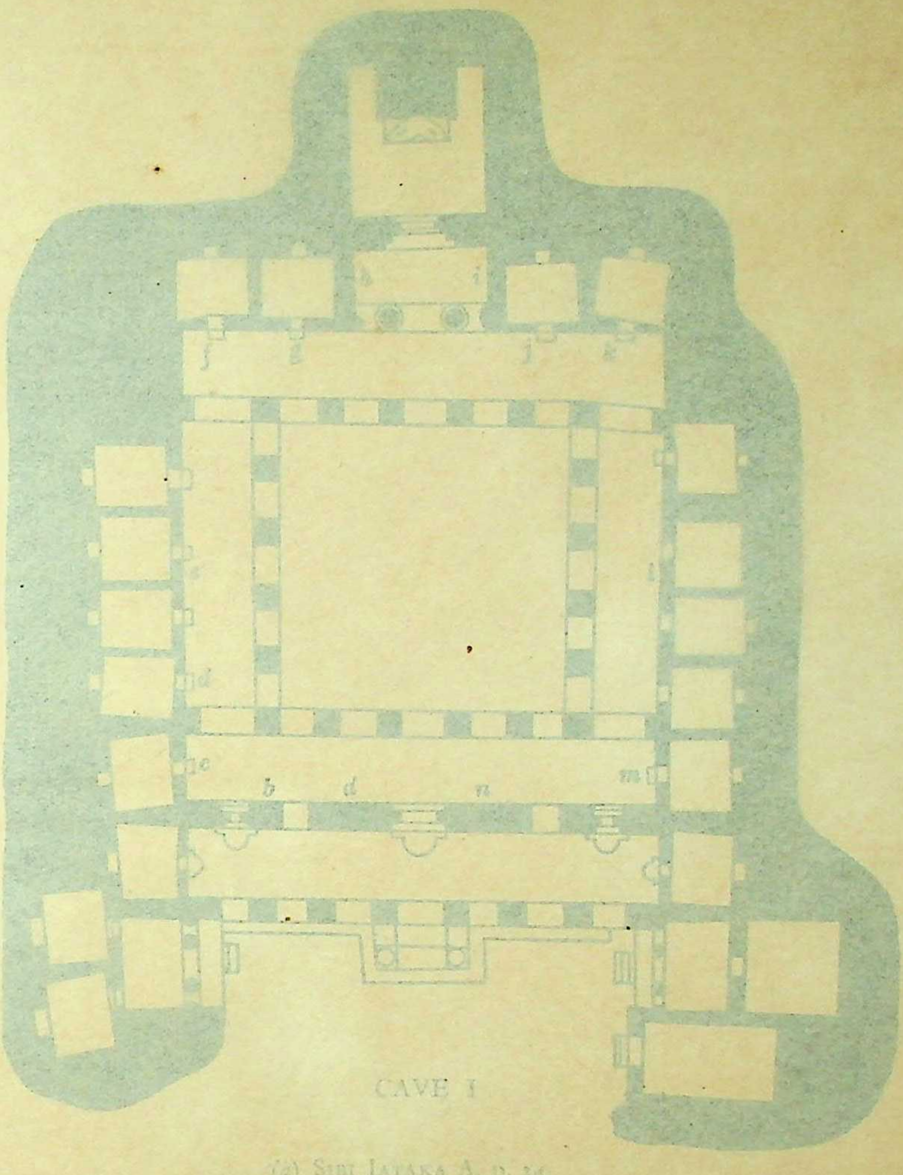
To enable the visitor to follow the various scenes depicted on the walls, four plans of the principal caves (I, II, XVI and XVII) wherein the paintings appear are given. The Buddhist *bhikshus* in their perambulations on festive occasions always started from the left, so the same order has been kept in numbering the scenes on the plans. For further facility cross references are given with the title of each story to show its position on the plan.

## SIBI JATAKA A (CAVE I *a*).

A hawk was once chasing a pigeon, which unable to escape from his enemy flew and took shelter with the king of the Sibis, who was no other than the Bodhisattva born as such at that time. The hawk came and demanded of King Sibi that he should give up the pigeon to him as he was his lawful prey. The Great Being in order to redeem the life of the pigeon, which in dire distress had so confidingly taken refuge with him, ascending one of the scales of the balance, cut an equal weight of flesh from his own body and giving it to the hawk satisfied his demands and saved the poor pigeon from death.

## MAHAJANAKA-JATAKA (CAVE I *b*).

A prince suspected by his brother, without reason, rebels against him and kills him. The king's consort, being with child, flees from the city; her son is brought up without knowledge of his father, but when he learns the truth, goes to sea on a merchant venture. He is wrecked, and a goddess brings him to his father's kingdom, where after answering some difficult questions, he marries the daughter of the usurper. By and by, he becomes an ascetic, and is followed by his wife.



CAVE I

(*a*) Sibi Jataka A, p. 24.
(*b*) Mahajanaka Jataka (?), p. 24.
(*c*) Dancing Girls.
(*d*) Sankhapala Jataka, p. 25.
(*e*) Palace Scene: Mahajanaka Jataka (?).
(*f*) Lustration and Renunciation. Mahajanaka Jataka (?).
(*g*) Great Bodhisattva: Padmapani.
(*h*) Temptation, p. 38.
(*i*) Buddha in various attitudes.
(*j*) A Bodhisattva (Vajrapani).
(*k*) Campeyya Jataka, p. 25.
(*l*) Procession (*not identified*).
(*m*) Palace Scene (*not identified*).
(*n*) Court Scene (Persian Embassy).

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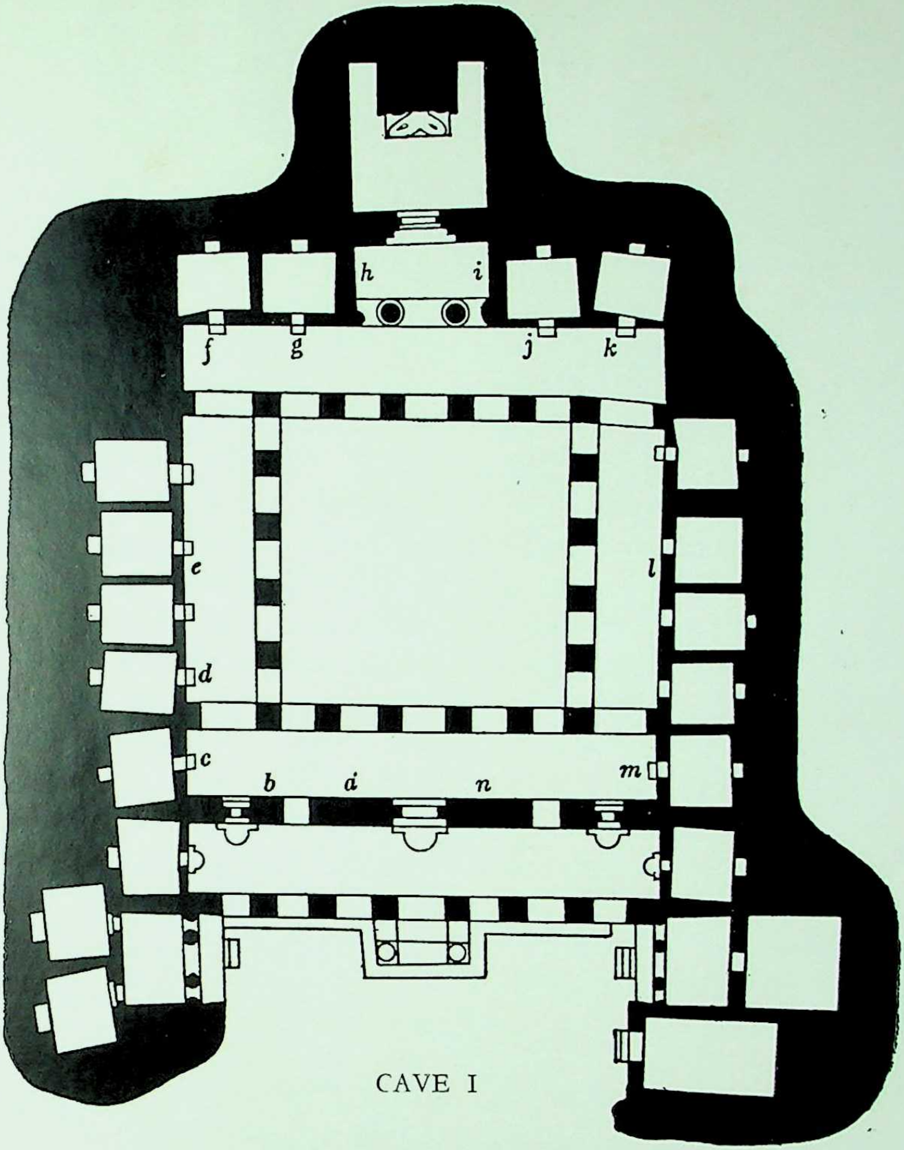

CAVE I

(*a*) Sibi Jataka A, p. 24.
(*b*) Mahajanaka Jataka (?), p. 24.
(*c*) Dancing Girls.
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(*k*) Campeyya Jataka, p. 25.
(*l*) Procession (*not identified*).
(*m*) Palace Scene (*not identified*).
(*n*) Court Scene (Persian Embassy).

*To face page* 24

## Saṁkhapala Jataka (Cave I *d*).

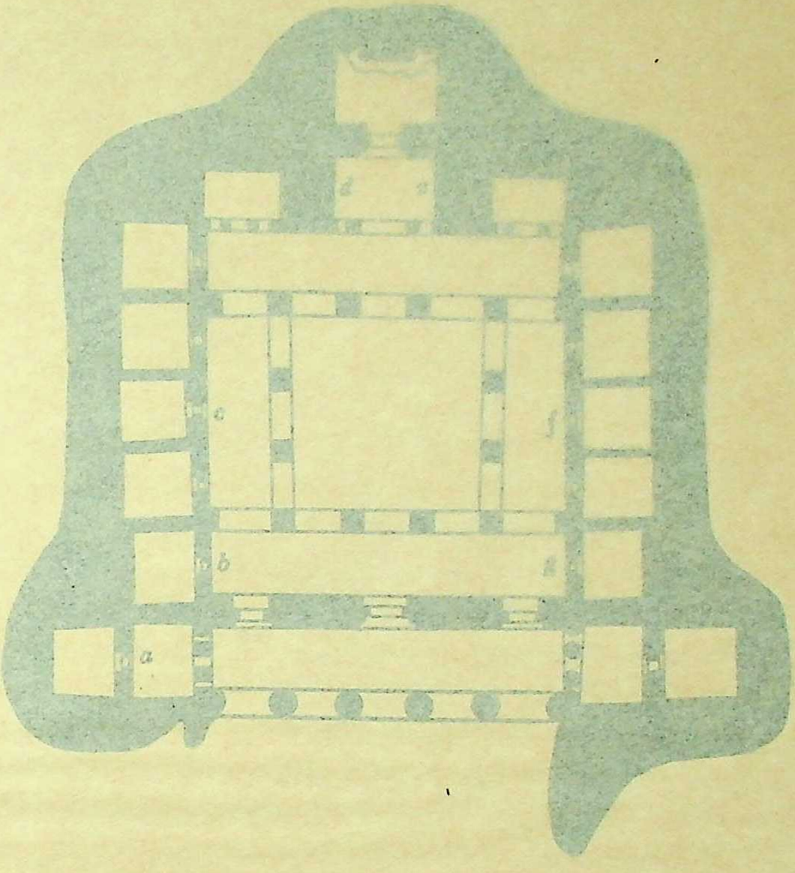
Once upon a time a king of Magadha ruled in Benares. At that time the Bodhisattva was born as the son of this king's chief consort and was named Duyyodhana. In time the father installed him as king and retired to lead the life of an ascetic and took up his abode near a lake called Samkhapala. There Samkhapala, a king of the Nagas, would come out of a river issuing from the lake and receive instruction in the Law from the ascetic. Once when the young king visited the father he saw Samkhapala and learned that he was a Naga King. The Bodhisattva aspiring to the Naga world, was at the end of his life, re-born as the Naga king Samkhapala. Growing sick of the magnificence there, he took upon himself the moral law and decided to sacrifice himself by way of charity and lay on the top of an ant-hill. Some hunters who were returning after vainly roaming about the forest saw Samkhapala and decided to kill and eat him. Samkhapala allowed himself to be maltreated without offering any resistance. Alara, a landowner of Mithila, happening to come that way delivered him from his persecutors. The Naga king then took his benefactor down with him to his palace and loaded him with pleasures for a year. Alara became an ascetic after this and received the homage of the King of Benares and gave him religious instruction.

## Campeyya Jataka (Cave I *k*).

There was once a Naga king, Campeyya by name, in the river Campa where serpents dwelt. This river was betwixt the realms of Anga and Magadha whose kings were always at war. The king of Magadha was once defeated by the Anga king ; he fled hotly pursued by Anga's warriors and coming to the Campa river both rider and horse plunged into it, just where Campeyya was sporting in the midst of his court. Campeyya conceived a liking for the Magadha king and took him to his jewelled pavilion, enquired of the reason why he plunged into the river and learning the reason consoled him and kept him for sometime as an honoured guest. Then by the serpent King's power he overcame the Anga king, and ruled over the two realms together, and became firm friends with his benefactor, and every year used to visit the king with tributes and presents. The Bodhisattva was at that time born in a poor family and used to go down to the river side with the king's people, and, seeing the serpent king's glory, coveted it. In time he was born as the Naga king, but soon felt remorse and let himself be caught and exhibited by a snake charmer. One day the king of Benares saw him and bought him. The Naga king took the Magadha king to the serpent world and after keeping him for seven days allowed him to depart to his own kingdom loaded with treasure.

## KSHANTIVADI JATAKA (CAVE II *a*).

The Bodhisattva once came to life in a Brahmin family endowed with vast riches. He learnt all the sciences, and when he came of age settled down as a householder. On the death of his parents, he distributed all his wealth among deserving people and adopted the life of an ascetic. Later he made his way to Benares and took up his abode in the royal park. One day the king, inflamed with strong drink, came to the park in the company of dancers, who entertained him with music and dancing, and he fell asleep. The women finding the king asleep threw away their instruments and went strolling into the park and coming upon the ascetic heard him preach the doctrine. The king woke up and learning that the dancers had left him and were listening to the preaching of a recluse in another part of the park, seized his sword in a rage and went there and asked the ascetic what he was preaching. The ascetic replied that it was the 'doctrine of patience.' Thereupon the king summoned his executioner and ordered him to scourge the ascetic with a lash of thorns and give him two thousand



CAVE II

(a) Kshantivadi Jataka (Fragmentary), p. 26.
(b) Hamsa Jataka, p. 27.
(c) Scenes from the Life of Buddha: Tushita Heaven, p. 35; Conception, p. 36; Maya's Dream, p. 36; Going to Lumbini Garden, p. 36; Nativity, p. 36; Seven Steps, p. 36.
(d and e) Miracle at Sravasti, p. 40.
(f) Ruru Jataka, p. 27; Vidhurapandita Jataka, p. 28; Purnavadana, p. 41.
(g) Lesson of the Cock (?); Bodhisattva with the Sword (?).

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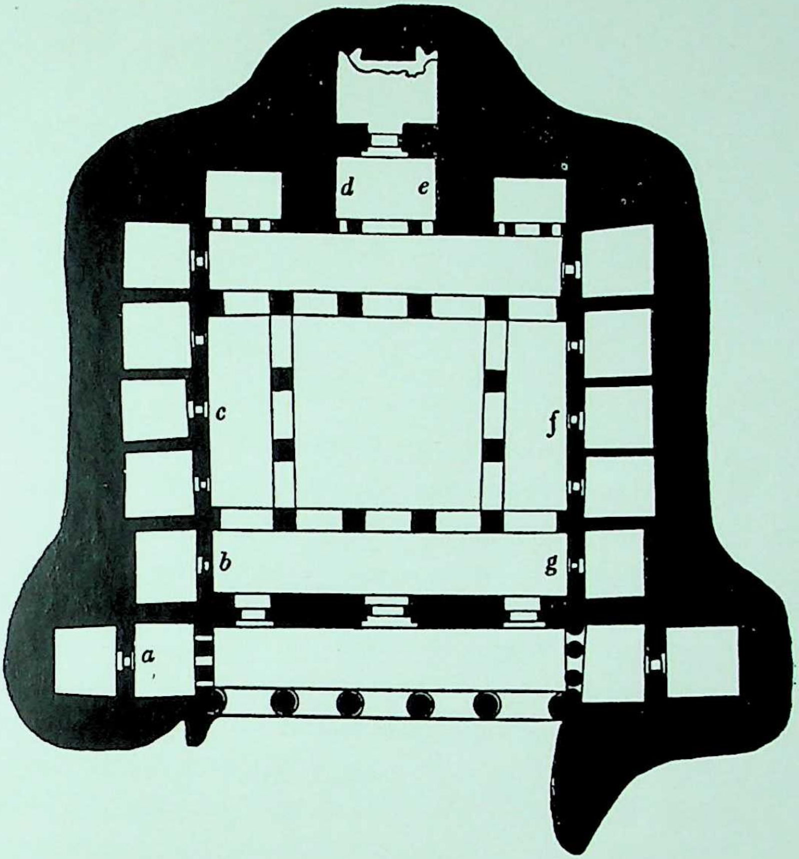
[illegible] of the reason why he plunged into [illegible] consoled him and kept him [illegible] guest. Then by the serpent King's [illegible] and ruled over the two realms [illegible] with his benefactor, and every [illegible] with tribute and presents. The [illegible] born in a poor family and used to [illegible] king's people, and, seeing [illegible] it. In time he was born as [illegible] and let himself be caught [illegible] One day the king of Benares [illegible] The Naga king took the Magadha [illegible] and after keeping him for seven days [illegible] kingdom loaded with treasure.

### [illegible] JATAKA (CAVE II *a*).

[illegible] life in a Brahmin family [illegible] He learnt all the sciences, and when [illegible] down as a householder. On [illegible] distributed all his wealth among [illegible] the life of an ascetic. Later he [illegible] up his abode in the royal [illegible] with strong drink, came to [illegible] who entertained him with [illegible] The women finding the [illegible] and went strolling in- [illegible] heard him preach the [illegible] that the dancers had [illegible] the preaching of a recluse in [illegible] in a rage and went [illegible] was preaching. The [illegible] of patience.' Thereupon [illegible] and ordered him to scourge [illegible] give him two thousand



CAVE II

(*a*) KSHANTIVADI JATAKA (FRAGMENTARY), p. 26.
(*b*) HAMSA JATAKA, p. 27.
(*c*) SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF BUDDHA : TUSHITA HEAVEN, p. 35 ; CONCEPTION, p. 36 ; MAYA'S DREAM, p. 36 ; GOING TO LUMBINI GARDEN, p. 36 ; NATIVITY, p. 36 ; SEVEN STEPS, p. 36.
(*d and e*) MIRACLE AT SRAVASTI, p. 40.
(*f*) RURU JATAKA, p. 27 ; VIDHURAPANDITA JATAKA, p. 28 ; PURNAVADANA, p. 41.
(*g*) LESSON OF THE COCK (?) ; BODHISATTVA WITH THE SWORD (?).

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strokes and to cut off his hands, feet, nose and ears asking between each act of cruelty what doctrine it was that the ascetic preached. Ever the holy victim only answered that it was the 'doctrine of patience,' which, he said, was seated deep in the heart and not in his hands, feet, nose or ears. The king struck the Bodhisattva above the heart with his foot and took himself off. The Commander-in-Chief attended to the Great Being's fatal wounds. As the king was leaving the garden the earth split in two and swallowed him up.

## HAMSA JATAKA (CAVE II *b*).

Once upon a time there reigned in Benares a king called the Father of Many Sons, and his Queen's name was Kshema. At that time the Great Being was a golden goose, the chief of ninety thousand geese. The Queen dreamed that a golden goose preached to her; and, waking she desired to find him. Persuaded by her and advised by his hunter, the King made his lakes a great sanctuary and proclaimed this afar. But when the golden geese came the hunter snared the Great Being and his captain, Sumukha, and brought them to the King, by the Great Being's free will, for the hunter would have set him free, recognizing his virtue. The King was delighted and did them honour, feeding them with honey and fried grain; and, holding out his hands in supplication, he prayed them to speak of the Law. . . . Thus did the Great Being discourse to the King the livelong night, and the Queen's craving was appeased.

## RURU JATAKA (CAVE II *f*).

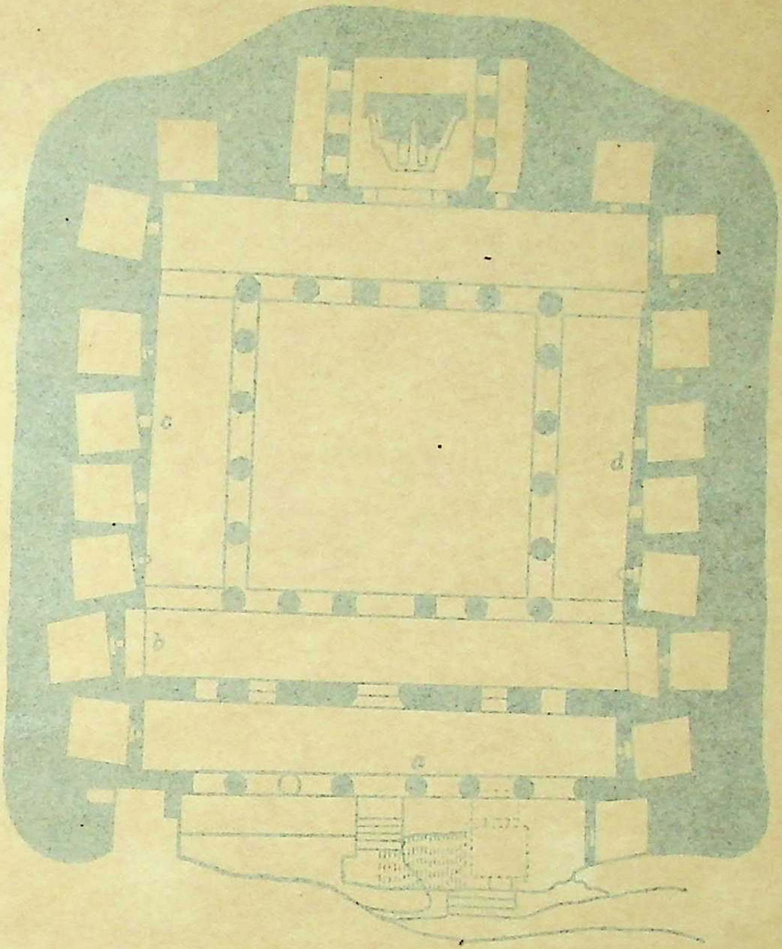
A merchant's son, brought up to pleasure by his rich parents, wasted his possessions and was dunned by his creditors Pretending that he would show them buried treasure, he then threw himself into the Ganges but, being frightened, he cried out pitifully. The Great Being had been born as a golden deer. He had forsaken the herd and was dwelling alone. He saved the drowning man, and then extracted a promise that he should not be betrayed. But when Queen Kshema dreamed of a golden deer who preached to her, and inquiry was made, the man broke the promise and guided the King to the deer's haunts. The King, enchanted by his honeyed voice, let his bow fall, and stood still in reverence ; and he took the Great Being to Benares and appeased the Queen's desire by his discourse, and, as a boon, the King proclaimed " I give protection to all creatures." From that time onwards no one durst so much as raise a hand against beast or bird.

### VIDHURAPANDITA JATAKA (CAVE II *f*).

In the city of Indapatta (Indraprastha) there once lived a king who was fortunate in having as his Minister the Bodhisattva, born as a sage, called Vidhurapandita. He gave instructions concerning temporal and spiritual matters to the King and the other Kings of Jambudvipa who were attracted to that City by the sage's great and sweet discourses concerning the Law. Once, four kings, one of whom was a Naga, unable to agree as to which of them was superior to the rest in virtue, appealed to the King of Indapatta if there was any wise man in his Court who would solve their doubt. The King referred them to Vidhurapandita, whose explanation of their question satisfied and pleased them. The wife of the Naga King coming to know of the great wisdom of Vidhurapandita took it into her head to hear the sage discourse and asked the King to bring him to her—an impossible task. But Punnaka, the Yakkha general, falling in love with Irandati, the Naga King's daughter, for the love of the Nagi, succeeded in bringing the sage after winning him from the King of Indapatta in a game of dice.

### SUTASOMA JATAKA (CAVES XVI *a*- XVII *e*).

The Bodhisattva came to life as the child of the Chief Queen of the King of Indapatta, in the Kingdom of Kuru,



CAVE XVI

(*a*) Sutasoma Jataka, p. 28.
(*b*) Jataka not identified.
(*c*) Conversion of Nanda, p. 40; Seven Manushi Buddhas.
(*d*) Scene from the Life of Buddha: Conception, p. 36, Horoscope of Asita, p. 37; Scene in School, p. 37; Four Drives, p. 37; First Meditation, p. 37: First visit to Rajagriha, p. 38; Offering of Sujata, p. 38; Offering of Trapussa and Bhalika, p. 39.

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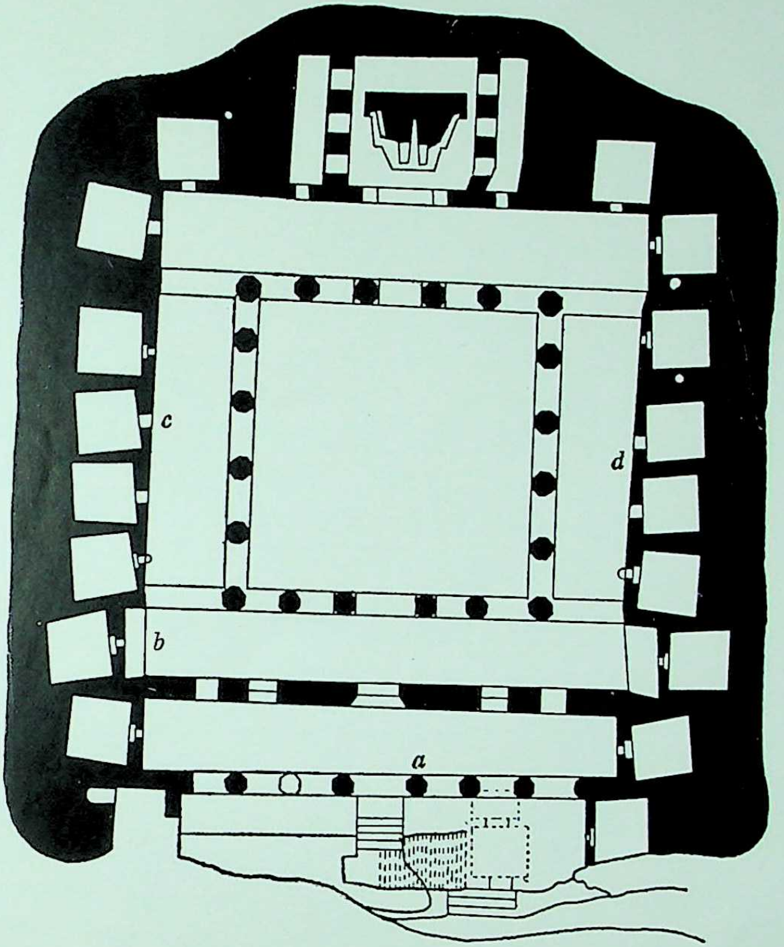
[illegible] a promise that he should [illegible] Queen Khemā dreamed of a [illegible] preaching to her, and inquiry was made [illegible] and guided the King to the [illegible] The King [illegible] by his honeyed voice, for he [illegible] and he took the Great [illegible] the Queen's desire by his [illegible] the King proclaimed "I give protection [illegible]." From that time onwards no one dare so much as raise a hand against beast or bird.

## Vidhurapandita Jataka (Plate II f).

In the city of Indapatta (Indraprastha) there once lived a King who was fortunate in having as his Minister the Bodhisattva, born as a sage called Vidhurapandita. He gave [illegible] concerning temporal and spiritual matters to the King and [illegible] other Kings of Jambudvipa who were attracted [illegible] discourses concerning [illegible] kings, one of whom was a Naga, unable to [illegible] which of them was superior to the rest in virtue, [illegible] if there was any wise man in his [illegible] who could solve their doubt. The King referred them to Vidhurapandita, whose explanation of their questions [illegible]. The wife of the Naga King coming to hear of the great wisdom of Vidhurapandita took it into her head [illegible] asked the King to bring him to her [illegible]. Then Punnaka, the Yakkha [illegible] the Naga King's daughter, [illegible] succeeded in bringing the sage after winning him from the King of Indapatta in a game of dice.

## Sutasoma Jataka (Plates XVI & XVII e).

The Bodhisattva came to life as the child of the Chief Queen of the King of Indapatta, in the Kingdom of Kuru.



CAVE XVI

(*a*) Sutasoma Jataka, p. 28.
(*b*) Jataka not identified.
(*c*) Conversion of Nanda, p. 40; Seven Manushi Buddhas.
(*d*) Scene from the Life of Buddha: Conception, p. 36; Horoscope of Asita, p. 37; Scene in School, p. 37; Four Drives, p. 37; First Meditation, p. 37; First visit to Rajagriha, p. 38; Offering of Sujata, p. 38; Offering of Trapussa and Bhalika, p. 39.

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named Sutasoma. He learnt all Sciences from a teacher of world-wide fame at Takkasila and in time succeeded to the throne of his father. Once when Sutasoma was coming out of a lotus-tank after a bath, he was seized by a man-eating robber and carried away. The King persuaded the cannibal to let him free, promising to return at daybreak after hearing some valuable verses from a Brahmin and making an offering to the preacher of the Law. To the wonder of the cannibal the Great Being returned faithfully to the fatal rendezvous as promised. Ultimately the man-eating robber, who was once a fellow student of the Bodhisattva's at Takkasila and then King of Benares till he turned a cannibal, was converted by the sweet preachings of the Bodhisattva, established in the moral law and finally restored to his kingdom.

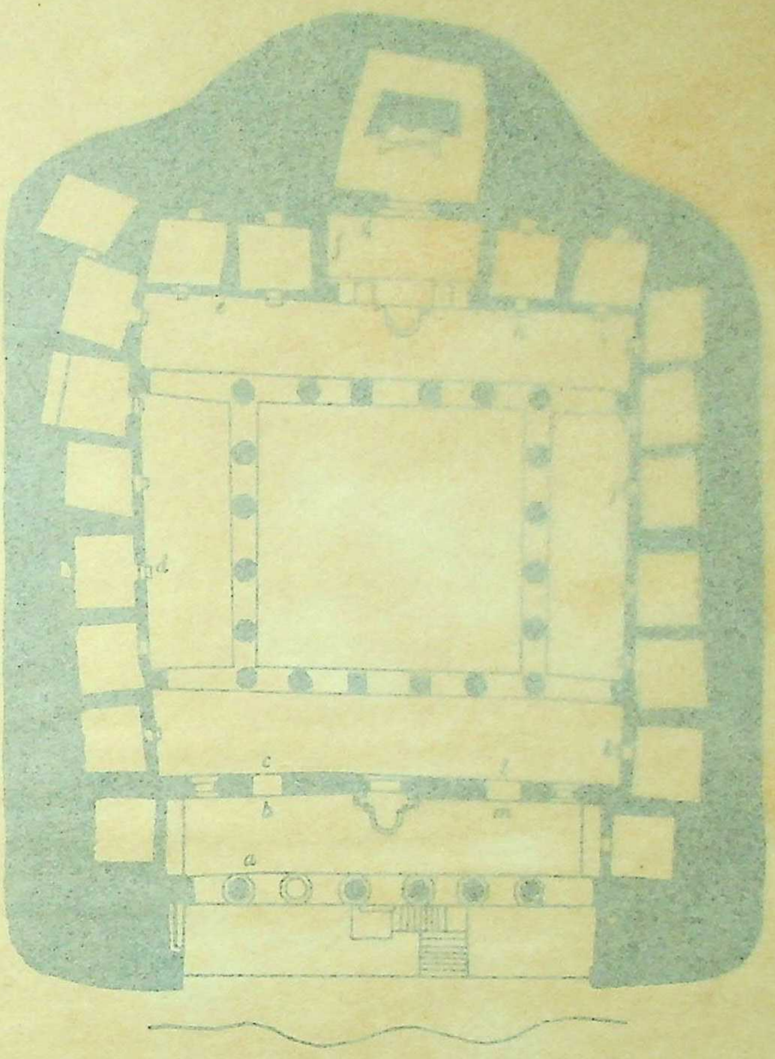
## SHADDANTA-JATAKA (CAVE XVII *c*).

Once the Bodhisattva came to life as the son of the chief elephant of a great herd of 8,000 in the Himalaya. They dwelt near Lake Shaddanta in a golden cave, amid pools of white lilies, blue, white and red lotuses, and thickets of red paddy grounds and of many other plants. The elephant was 82 cubits high and 120 cubits long, and had trunk like a silver rope. He had two queens, and accidentally he offended one of them. She prayed that she might be reborn as a beautiful maiden and become the chief wife of the King of Benares: 'Then I shall be dear and charming in his eyes, and in the position to do what I please. So I will speak to the King and send a hunter with a poisoned arrow to wound and slay the elephant, and thus I may be able to have brought to me a pair of his tusks which emit six-coloured rays.' Thenceforth she took no food, and pining away, she died.

She was reborn and became the Queen of Benares, and carried out her wicked intention. When the hunter whom she sent, travelling seven years, had shot the royal elephant with the poisoned arrow, he was unable to cut off the tusks, although the elephant lay down and let him climb up his tusks ; so the elephant with his trunk pulled them out and gave them to the hunter, not as having no value, but as less than the ' tusks of omniscience,. . . .and may this meritorious act be to me the cause of attaining omniscience.' When the tusks were brought to the Queen, she laid them in her lap on her jewelled fan, and then at the remembrance of one who in her former existence had been her dear lord, she was filled with so great a sorrow that she could not endure it, but her heart then and there was broken and that very day she died. The six-rayed, or six-coloured, tusks are generally taken to mean six tusks.

## MAHAKAPI JATAKA A (CAVE XVII *c*).

In one of his lives the Bodhisattva ruled over eighty thousand monkeys as their king. The king of Benares at that time received a mango caught in fishermens' net, and of such an exquisite flavour that he enquired as to where the tree that produced it was to be found. He then went with his retinue to the forest and found the monkeys eating the mangoes he so much coveted, and ordered his men to surround the monkeys and shoot them with their arrows. Finding themselves besieged, the Bodhisattva got up a tree on the bank of a river where they all were, and contrived to form a bridge over the river to another tree on the opposite bank by which all his subjects were able to escape unharmed, although by a maliciously violent jump on his back by the monkey, Devadatta, the Great Being was fatally hurt. The king who saw what the Bodhisattva had done for saving his subjects, had him carefully tended and received instruction and teaching from the Great Being before he died, when he performed his obsequies in a befitting manner.



CAVE XVII

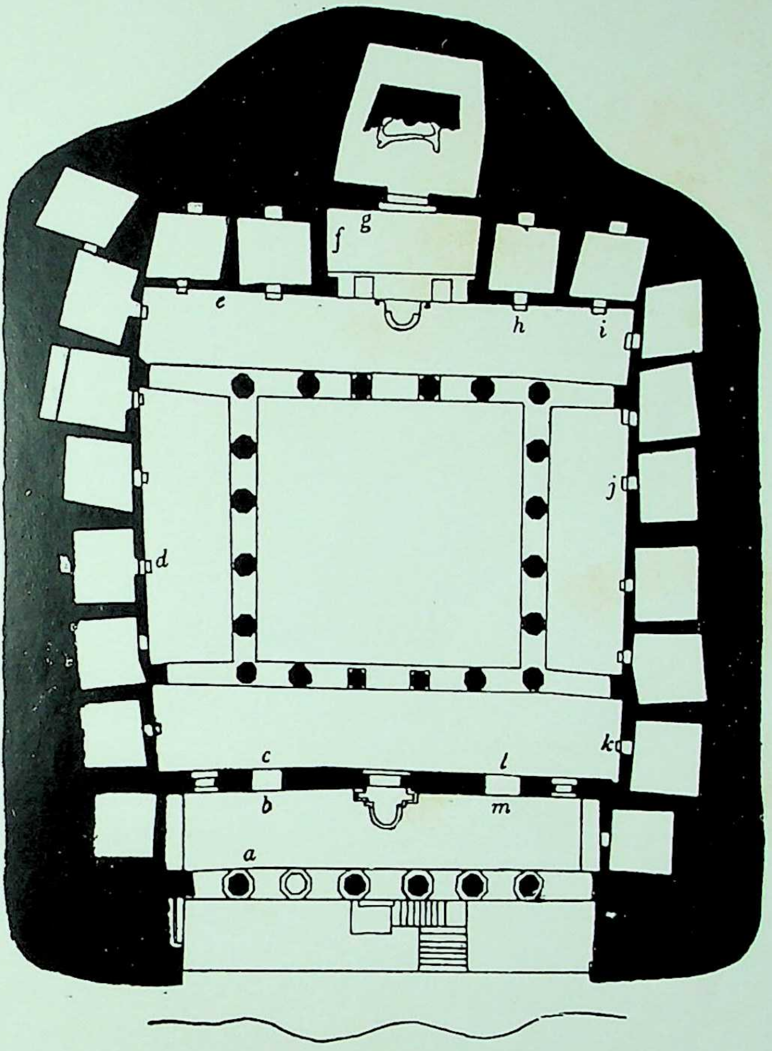
(*a*) Wheel of Samsara.
(*b*) *Gandharvas.*
(*c*) Shaddanta Jataka, p. 29; Mahakapi Jataka, p. 30.
(*d*) Visvantara Jataka, p. 31.
(*e*) Sutasoma Jataka, p. 28.
(*f*) Interrogation of Sariputra and the Sermon, p. 39.
(*g*) Mother and Child before Buddha, p. 19.
(*h*) Sarabha Jataka, p. 32; Matriposhaka Jataka, p. 33; Matsya Jataka, p. 35; Syama Jataka, p. 54.
(*i*) Mahisha Jataka, p. 34.
(*j*) Simhala Avadana, p. 43.
(*k*) Sibi Jataka B, p. 35.
(*l*) Mriga Jataka A; Bear Jataka and Mriga Jataka B.
(*m*) Subjugation of the furious Elephant.

*To face page 30*

she sent travelling [illegible] with the [illegible] although [illegible] as the elephant with his own [illegible] to the [illegible] of repentance. [illegible] the Queen, [illegible] at the commandment of [illegible] had been her husband [illegible] she could not endure [illegible] and that very day she died. The [illegible] tusks are generally taken to [illegible]

## MAHAKAPI JATAKA [illegible]

In one of his lives the Bodhisattva [illegible] thousand monkeys at [illegible] that they [illegible] each of [illegible] the monkeys [illegible] and [illegible] Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva [illegible] bank of a river [illegible] bridge with his [illegible] another tree on the opposite bank by which all his subjects were able to escape unharmed. Although by a malevolent [illegible] jump on his back by [illegible] Devadatta, the Great Being was fatally hurt. The king who saw what the Bodhisattva had done for saving his subjects, [illegible] and received instruction and [illegible] the Great Being before he died, when he performed his obsequies in a befitting manner.



CAVE XVII

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(*i*) Mahisha Jataka, p. 34.
(*j*) Simhala Avadana, p. 41.
(*k*) Sibi Jataka B, p. 35.
(*l*) Mriga Jataka A ; Bear Jataka and Mriga Jataka B.
(*m*) Subjugation of the furious Elephant.

*To face page 30*

# Visvantara Jataka (Cave XVII *d* ).

To King Sibi was born a son named Sanjaya, whose Queen Phusati had a son Visvantara. Before his birth the fortune-tellers said that he would be devoted to almsgiving, never satisfied with giving. As soon as he was born, he held out his hand to his mother and said, ' Mother, I wish to make some gift, is there anything ? ' and she gave him a purse of money. When he was eight years old, he wished to give away something of his own—his heart, his flesh, or his eyes. As he grew up, he gave great alms, at last even his magical elephant with its costly jewelled trappings, which could bring rain to the drought-stricken kingdom of Kalinga. The people were so angry with Visvantara for giving their elephant away, that to save his life his father banished him ; his wife Madri and children accompanied him. He gave everything away, even surrendering to four Brahmins, who had not shared in the other gifts, the horses of the chariot in which he was driving away with his wife and children, boy and girl : so they had to go on foot. To prove his virtue, the gods allowed his children to be taken by a Brahmin Jujaka, who was cruel to them, and bound and beat them. At night, as they travelled he left the chidlren lying on the ground, while he climbed into a tree for fear of wild beasts. But the gods pitied the children, and in the guise of their father and mother came every night and tended and fed them, but in the morning put them in their bonds again. In the end they reached their grandfather's court, where they were recognized. Then the great God Sakra, feeling sure that the Great Being would give away even his own wife, decided himself to ask for her, so as to enable him to attain the supreme height of perfection, and having thus made it impossible that she should be given to any one else, then to give her back. At last Visvantara and Madri are summoned by Sanjaya and Phusati from hermitage life and restored to their children and royal honours.

## MAHAKAPI JATAKA B (CAVE XVII).

Once a Brahmin husbandman in a village in Kasi, after ploughing his fields, loosened his oxen and was doing some other work. The oxen strayed little by little and escaped into the forest. The Brahmin when it was late looked for the oxen and missing them wandered into the forest, and losing his bearings was lost there and went without food for days. He then found a fruit tree and in climbing it slipped and fell into an abyss close by and was unable to escape for some more days. At that time the Bodhisattva, who was living in that forest as a monkey noticed the wretched man and rescued him. While the mokey was asleep the ungrateful fellow tried to split its head open with a stone. But the Great Being sprang up and perching on a tree and bearing no malice towards him pointed the way out of the forest and disappeared. The Brahmin because of his sinning against the Great Being became a leper.

## SARABHA JATAKA (CAVE XVII *b*).

Once the king of Benares who delighted in hunting went ahunting to the forest and ordered his courtiers not to let a deer go by him. The Bodhisattva, who was then born as a stag, happened to be the first to be put up when the men surrounded a covert and began the beat. The stag finding men standing on all sides without a break, rushed straight at the king, who seeing him shot an arrow but missed; as the stag rolled over, the king thought he was hit and gave the halloa. The circle of men now broke, and the stag rising, made off swift as the wind. The king, who considered himself the best marksman, seeing that the fellows were making sport of him, set off after the stag at great speed and plunged into the forest. There was a covered pit which the stag avoided, but the king fell into it and as it was deep and full of water, he was unable to get out of it. The stag finding he was not followed retraced his steps and rescued the king who was helplessly struggling in the water. Setting him on his own back he then led him forth from the forest and brought him not far from his army, after admonishing him and establishing him in the great Virtues.

### MATRIPOSHAKA JATAKA (CAVE XVII *b*).

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta reigned in Benares, the Bodhisattva was born as an elephant in the Himalayan region, a magnificent white beast : but this mother was blind, and the other elephants did not give her the sweet food he sent : so he took her away to Mount Chandorana, and there he cherished her. One day he saved a forester, who for seven days had lost his way, and carried him out of the forest on his back. The man, however, marked the trees and hills, and then made his way to Benares. At that time the King's State Elephant had just died, and there was a proclamation for another fit for the King's riding. The forester betrayed the friendly elephant, and showed the King's hunters the way. The Bodhisattva, in spite of his great strength, refused to destroy them, lest his virtue should be marred ; so he was caught in the lotus-lake and taken to the King's stable, decked with festoons and garlands. The King took all manner of fine food and gave to him ; but not a bit would he eat : ' Without my mother I will eat nothing ,' he said. When the King heard the story he gave him his freedom ; and the Elephant went back to the hills and to his mother, and, drawing water from a limpid pool, sprinkled it over her, and at last she knew him and blessed the King's goodness, and the King did continual honour to the Bodhisattva, and made a stone image of him.

There the inhabitants of all India, year by year, gathered to perform what was called the Elephant Festival.

### MATSYA JATAKA (CAVE XVII *b*).

The Bodhisattva was once born as a fish living in a tank at Savatthi in the kingdom of Kosala. A drought overtook the land ; the crops withered and water gave out in tanks and pools, causing the fishes and the tortoises of this pond to bury themselves in the mud. The crows and other birds flocked to the spot and picked them out with their beaks and devoured them. Noticing the sorry plight of his kinsfolk, the Great Being decided to save them in their hour of need. He therefore came out, parting asunder the mud. He made a solemn Profession of Goodness and by its efficacy obliged Dajjema, king of Devas, to cause heavy rains to fall and thus saved his kinsfolk from certain death. And when his life closed, he passed away to fare according to his deserts.

## SYAMA JATAKA (CAVE XVII *h*).

Once the Bodhisattva was born in a miraculous way as the son, named Suvanna Syama, of a hunter and his wife, who had renounced the world and were living the life of anchorites. It so happened that for a sin committed in former times the parents lost both their eyes, and they became entirely dependent upon their young son. From that time Syama supplied them with all their wants and took the utmost care of his helpless parents. Once when Syama went to the river to fetch water, the king of Benares, who was out hunting in the forest, came to the river from which Syama had just filled his water-jar, mistook him for a deer and let fly a poisoned arrow and fatally hit the Bodhisattva. Hearing that the Great Being was lamenting the fate of his blind parents now deprived of his care, the king promised to take his place and take care of them. Fortunately at the end, by the intervention of a goddess, not only was Syama restored to life, but the blind parents also regained their sight.

## MAHISHA JATAKA (CAVE XVII *i*).

At one time the Bodhisattva was born as a buffalo. Growing strong and big he used to range the hills and mountains. Once after grazing, when he was standing under a pleasant tree, an impertinent monkey which was on that tree came down and getting on the back of the buffalo voided there, and then taking hold of one of the horns swung down from it by his tail and disported himself. The Bodhisattva, being full of patience, kindness and mercy, took no notice at all of his conduct. This the monkey did again and again without any resentment from the Great Being. But once another buffalo, a savage beast, happened to come and stand under the same tree, when the Bodhisattva was at another place. The wicked monkey thinking it to be the old one, with whom he had been playing such pranks with impunity, climbed on his back and did as before. The savage buffalo at once shook him off upon the ground and drove his horn into the monkey's heart and trampled him to pieces under his hoofs.

### SIBI JATAKA B. (CAVE XVII *k*).

Prince Sibi, the son of the King of Arishtapura, was the Great Being. He gave much in alms ; but one day he desired to give something that was truly himself—his heart, his flesh, or his eyes—or to work as a slave. Sakra, the god, resolved to try him, and he came as a blind beggar and asked first for one eye, then the other ; and the prince gave them, suffering great agony, and surrounded by his weeping and wailing ministers and women. Having received both eyes, Sakra returned to the abode of the gods. The end of the story is mystic ; for Sakra came again and gave the blind King the eyes of Truth, absolute and perfect, which were 'neither natural nor divine.' Yet we are left thinking that the King received both natural sight and spiritual.

## SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF BUDDHA

### THE BODHISATTVA IN THE TUSHITA HEAVEN (CAVE II *c*).

After his penultimate birth as Visvantara when he realized the perfection of charity, the Bodhisattva was born as Svetaketu, a Deva of the Tushita heaven, *i.e.*, a heaven for the satisfied gods. Sitting there he made the four great preliminary examinations—the examination of the time, continent, country and family in which he would be born for the last time. Having seen that the present was the propitious time, he decided to be born in the continent of Jambudvipa (India), in the country of Magadha (Behar) and of Maya, the queen of Suddhodhana, the head of the Sakyas.

### QUEEN MAYA'S DREAM AND CONCEPTION (CAVES II*c*-XVI *d*).

Maya is forewarned of the birth of her illustrious son by a marvellous dream in which there appears to descend a white six-tusked elephant which enters her right side. In her wonder at the extraordinary dream, she reveals it to her husband and wants an explanation of the meaning of the dream. The palace Brahmins are consulted and one of them predicts that there would be born to the queen a son bearing the thirty-two marks of a great man, who, if he stayed at home, would become a universal monarch, but that if he shaved his hair and beard and left his home clad in an orange-coloured robe would become a perfectly enlightened Buddha.

### THE GOING TO THE LUMBINI GARDEN AND THE NATIVITY (CAVE II *c*).

The queen was on her way, in a palanquin, to her father's house and chanced to go to the Lumbini garden with her ladies when the appointed time came and the wonderful child was born. Maya was standing with her right hand clutching a branch of the Sal tree supported by her sister Mahaprajapati, and as the divine child issued from the right side of the queen, Brahma and Indra received him.

### THE SEVEN STEPS (CAVE II *c*).

The new born babe now took the seven steps on so many lotuses, Indra protecting him with an umbrella. Advancing to the east he said—'I will reach the highest *nirvana*,' to the south—'I will be the first of all creatures,' to the west—'This will be my last birth,' to the north—'I will cross the ocean of existence.'

### THE HOROSCOPE OF RISHI ASITA (CAVE XVI *d*).

The Rishi Asita when consulted declared that the child would become a Buddha, which thought was utterly repugnant to the royal father, who thereupon set about doing his utmost to prevent his consummation.

### THE SCENE IN THE SCHOOL (CAVE XVI *d*).

Having been sent to school with the other noble children of the Sakya clan, the young Siddhartha gave evidence of his miraculous powers by enumerating and demonstrating his knowledge of more systems of writing than were known even to his guru, Visvamitra.

### THE FIRST MEDITATION (CAVE XVI *d*).

Once the prince was taken by his father to see a ploughing match. There seeing the tired oxen bleeding from their necks and the men toiling in the midday sun and the birds devouring the helpless insects which came forth from the ground, the Bodhisattva was filled with grief, and retiring under a *Jambu* tree became wrapt in a state of unconscious ecstasy. When the prince was missed and a search made he was found still lost in meditation, the shadow of the tree still shading him, though the shadow of the other trees had moved with the ascending sun.

### THE FOUR DRIVES (CAVE XVI *d*).

King Suddhodhana, who was not attracted by the prospect of his son and heir abandoning the sovereignty and going forth as a humble mendicant to lead the life of an ascetic, exerted himself to attract the prince to worldly things by indulging him in every form of luxury and pleasure, and kept him almost a prisoner within the palace walls. But the prince prevailed upon his charioteer Chandaka to take him out, and during his four famous drives saw the pitiful spectacle which opened his eyes to the path he should follow to obtain freedom from all worldly ills.

### THE FIRST VISIT TO RAJAGRIHA (CAVE XVI *d*).

The prince after he made the great renunciation once happened to go to the capital of Magadha and as a monk was on his rounds at the proper time in quest of alms in the bazar of the town in view of the royal palace. The king, Bimbisara, learning of his presence visited him, and offered half of his kingdom if he would give up his monk's life. Failing in this he secured a promise that the Great Being should pay the first visit to him after becoming a Buddha.

### THE OFFERING OF SUJATA (CAVE XVI *d*).

In his search after truth the Bodhisattva made many enquiries into the various systems of belief and underwent a long trial of the many forms of austerities, and penance and finding that they benefited nothing he resolved to nourish his body. The first food that was offered him was by Sujata, the daughter of a village lord who had been forewarned by an angel. This he accepted as a good omen.

### TEMPTATION OF BUDDHA (CAVE I *h*).

The Bodhisattva under the Bodhi tree was approaching the supreme moment of the attainment of Enlightenment, now Mara, the Evil Spirit, fearful lest the Bodhisattva should accomplish his ends and open up the path of salvation for others, approached him, trying to persuade him to abandon his quest, tempting him with both the lusts of power and pleasure, even commanding his own daughters to disport themselves before him ; but the Bodhisattva rose superior to his wiles. Thereupon Mara summoned his demons and made a furious and appalling assault upon Gautama, seeking to dislodge him from his seat, challenging his right thereto. The Bodhisattva, however, called upon the Earth to bear witness to his right by virtue of his acts in previous existences. To this appeal the goddess of Earth responded and Mara defeated fled in dismay. It was in the course of the succeeding night, that Siddhartha passed from the state of being a Bodhisattva to the full and perfect Buddhahood.

### THE OFFERING OF TRAPUSA AND BHALLIKA (CAVE XVI *d*).

The Buddha went into a seven weeks' trance after the enlightenment, at the end of which he stood in great need of food. At that time the caravan of two brothers, Trapusa and Bhallika, merchants of Orissa, coming near the grove where the Buddha was seated, were warned by the Genius of the grove and they were therefore enabled to make offerings of honeycomb and wheat to the Great Being.

### THE QUESTIONS TO SARIPUTRA (CAVE XVII *f*).

'When the Master stood at the foot of the staircase (by which he descended from heaven after preaching to the thirty-three Gods) first the Elder Sariputra gave him greeting, afterward the rest of the company.'

Amidst this assembly, the Master thought : " Moggallana has been shown to possess supernatural power, Upali as one versed in the sacred law, but the quality of high wisdom possessed by Sariputra has not been shown. Save and except me, no other possesses wisdom so full and complete as his ; I will make known the quality of his wisdom." (This he does by putting successively more difficult questions, which Sariputra answers).

### THE GREAT MIRACLE AT SRAVASTI (CAVES I *e*-II *d* and *e*).

At one time the Buddha, in order to confound the heretical teachers, is said to have given a great exhibition of his miraculous powers in the presence of king Prasenajit of Sravasti. Of the many miracles shown, one was that of showing himself simultaneously in different places.

### CONVERSION OF NANDA (CAVE XVI *c*).

Nanda was a half-brother of the Buddha's. The Buddha is said to have led him away from his beloved wife by the device of giving him his bowl to carry, refusing to take it from him until they reached the monastery, where the young man was promptly shaved and ordained as a monk, despite all his protestations. Once while the Buddha was abroad, Nanda contrived to steal out of the monastery and was stealthily making his way through the surrounding grove of trees. The all-knowing Buddha finding it out came rapidly flying through the air and alighted some little distance in front of the fugitive. The wretched youth quickly hid himself behind a tree, but lo ! as the Buddha drew near, the tree was suddenly raised bodily into the air, disclosing the unfortunate Nanda to the Master's gaze. He was straightway marched back to the monastery.

### SUBJUGATION OF THE FURIOUS ELEPHANT (CAVE XVII *m*).

Devadatta, the wicked and envious cousin of the Buddha was never able to endure the fame and success of his great kinsman. He thrice attempted his life, the last time by letting loose a furious and intoxicated elephant in the city of Rajagriha. Needless to say the attempt failed.

## PURNA AVADANA (CAVE II *f*).

The ship of a merchant named Bhavila is in danger of being wrecked by the genii. At the last moment his half-brother Purna, a monk, appears and the disaster is averted. The rescuer advises Bhavila to build a sanctuary of the sandalwood, which he has brought with him on his voyage, for the Master. The merchant acts accordingly and ultimately in response to Purna's and Bhavila's invitation the Buddha and his company appear miraculously (*Divyavadana*).

## SIMHALA AVADANA (CAVE XVII *f*).

This scene was formerly identified with the *Landing of Vijaya in Ceylon*. But a closer study of the surroundings of the picture has recently proved that the artist had simply in view the famous *avadana* of Simhala. In fact all the episodes, *viz.*, the shipwreck, the life of pleasure with the Rakhshasis, the escape through the air on the back of the big white horse Balaha, the pursuit by his wife, the *Rakshasi*, the entrance of the latter into the zenana of the king of Simha Kalpa, the sad end of the latter and the whole of his court, the presence of mind and the courage of Simhala, his winning the throne and finally the expedition which he conducted against the ogress inhabitants of the island where his boat was wrecked, are faithfully depicted on the wall.

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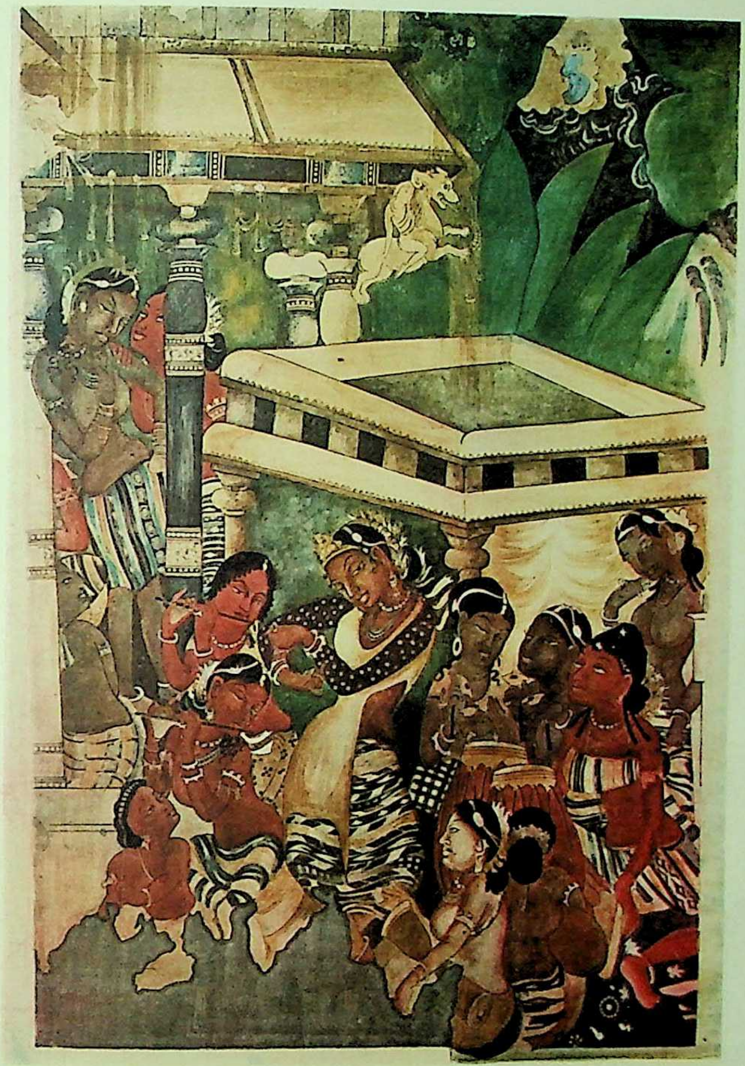
# PLATES



Dance Scene : Cave I

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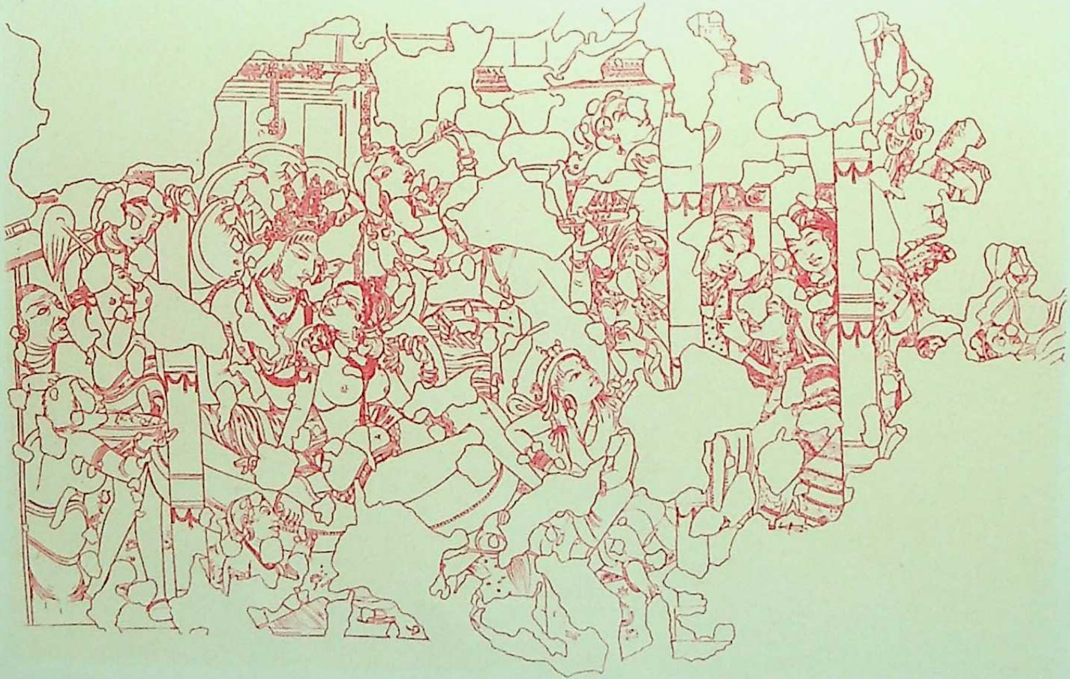
PLATE II



Palace Scene : Cave I

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PLATE III

On Wall of left Corridor : Cave II

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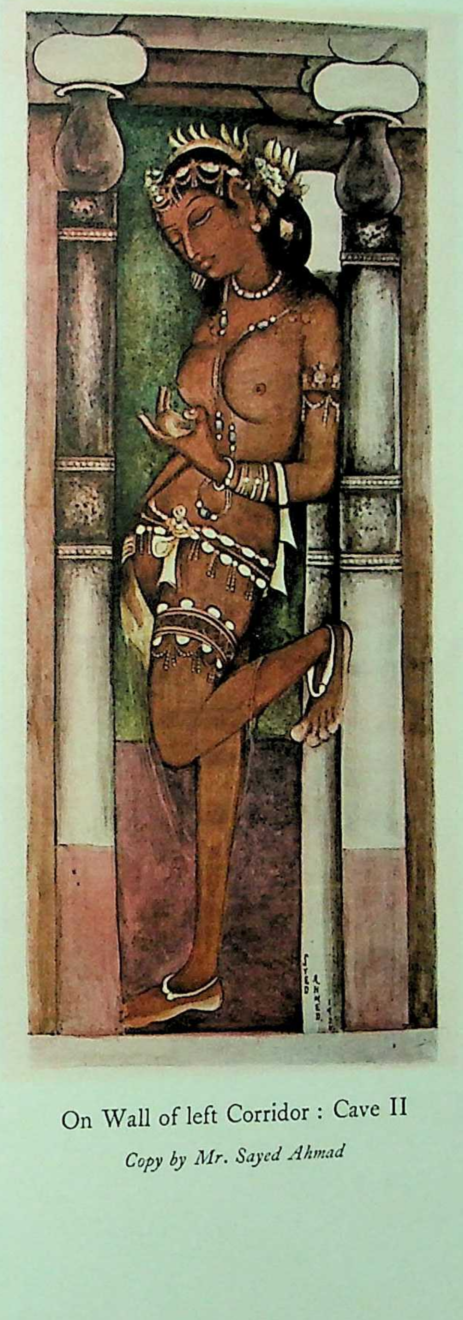
PLATE III



On Wall of left Corridor : Cave II

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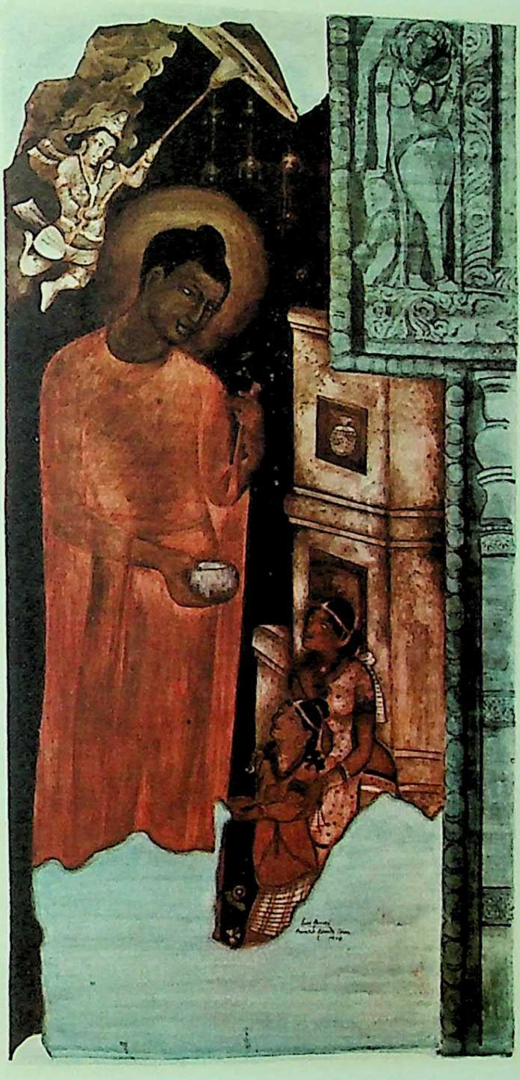

Mother and Child before Buddha

Cave XVII

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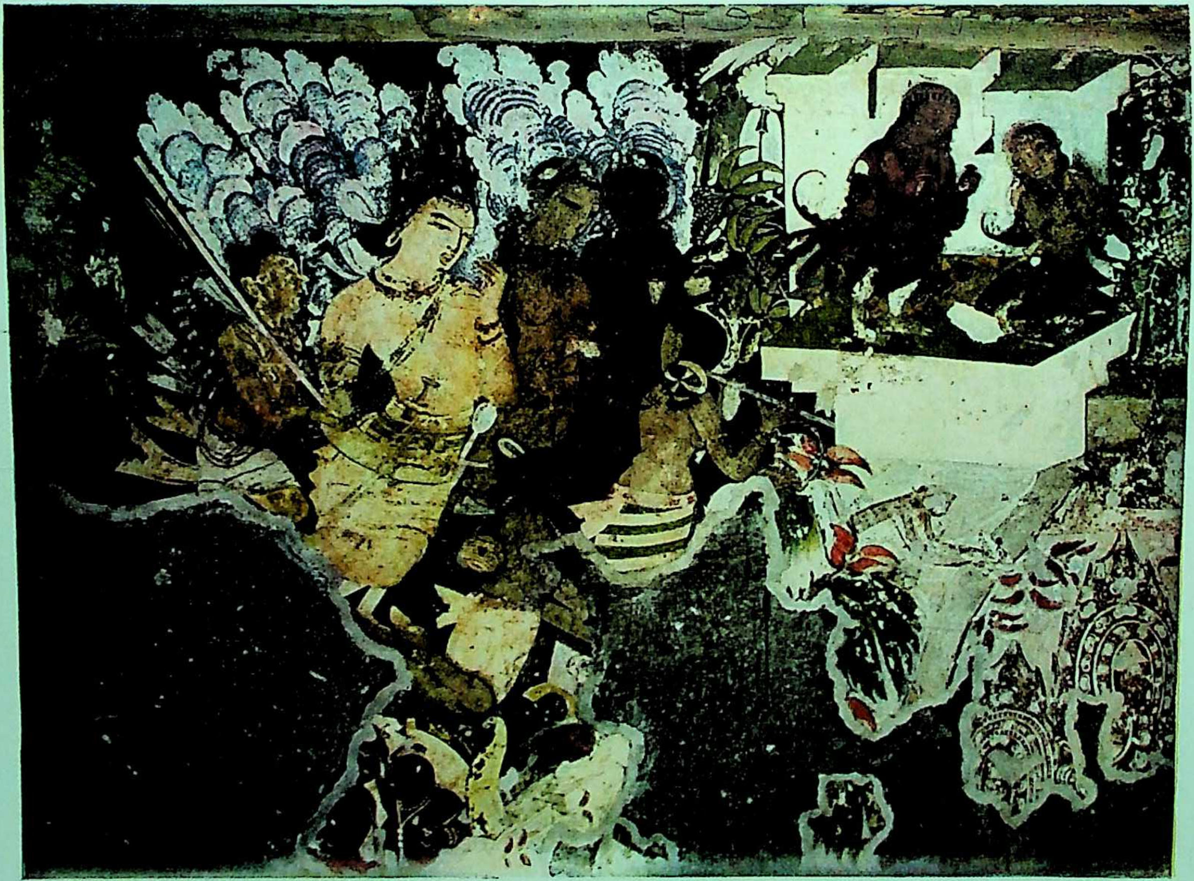
PLATE V



*Apsaras* (flying figures): Cave XVII

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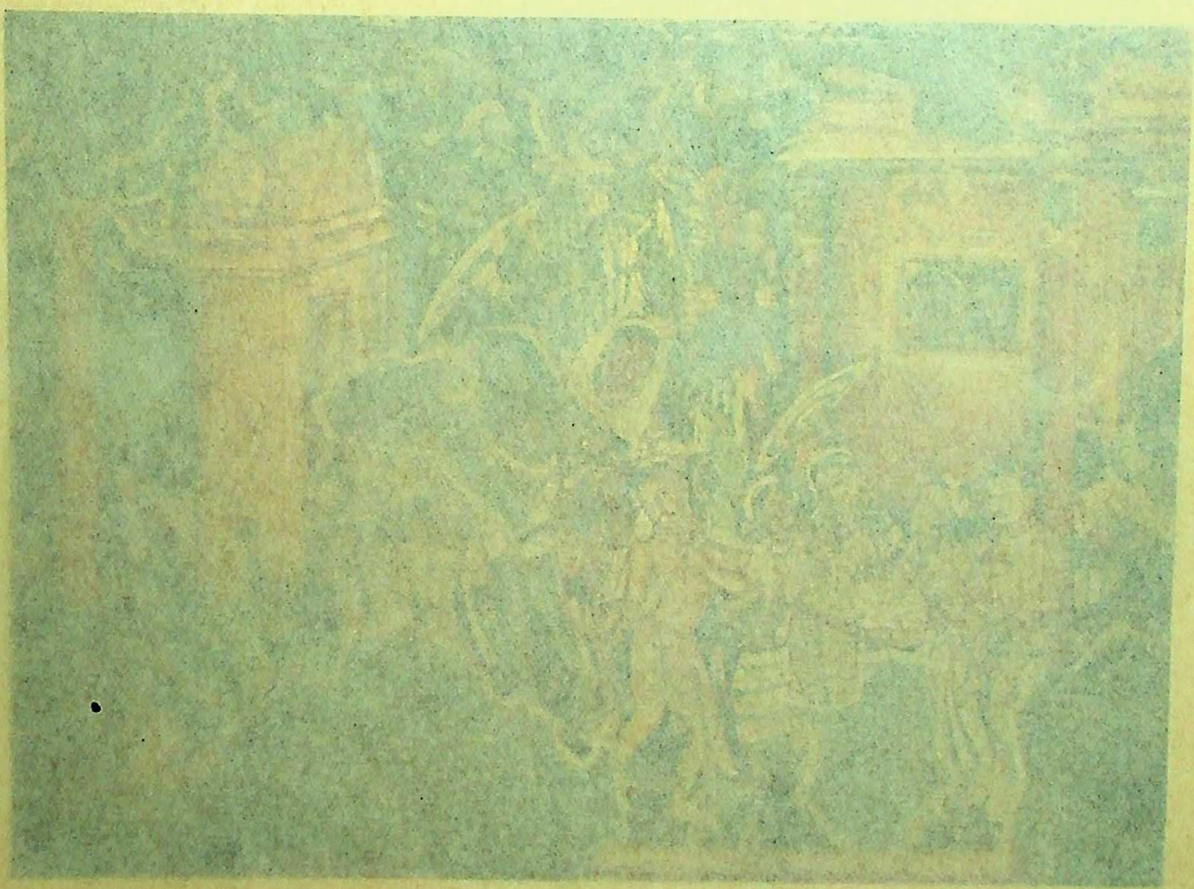
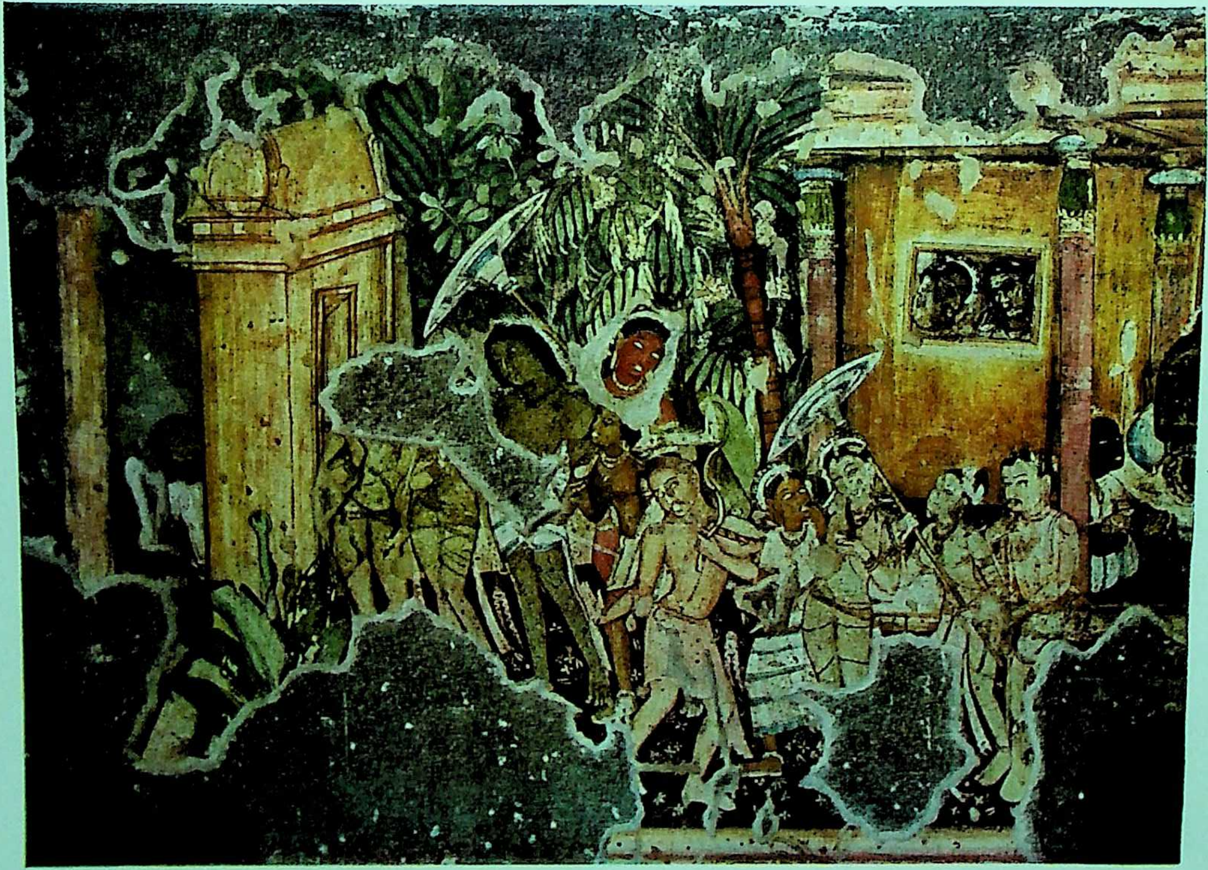
PLATE VI



A Raja and his consort going out of the palace. Cave XVII

Printed by Henry Stone & Son, Ltd., London and Banbury

PLATE VI



A Raja and his consort going out of the palace : Cave XVII

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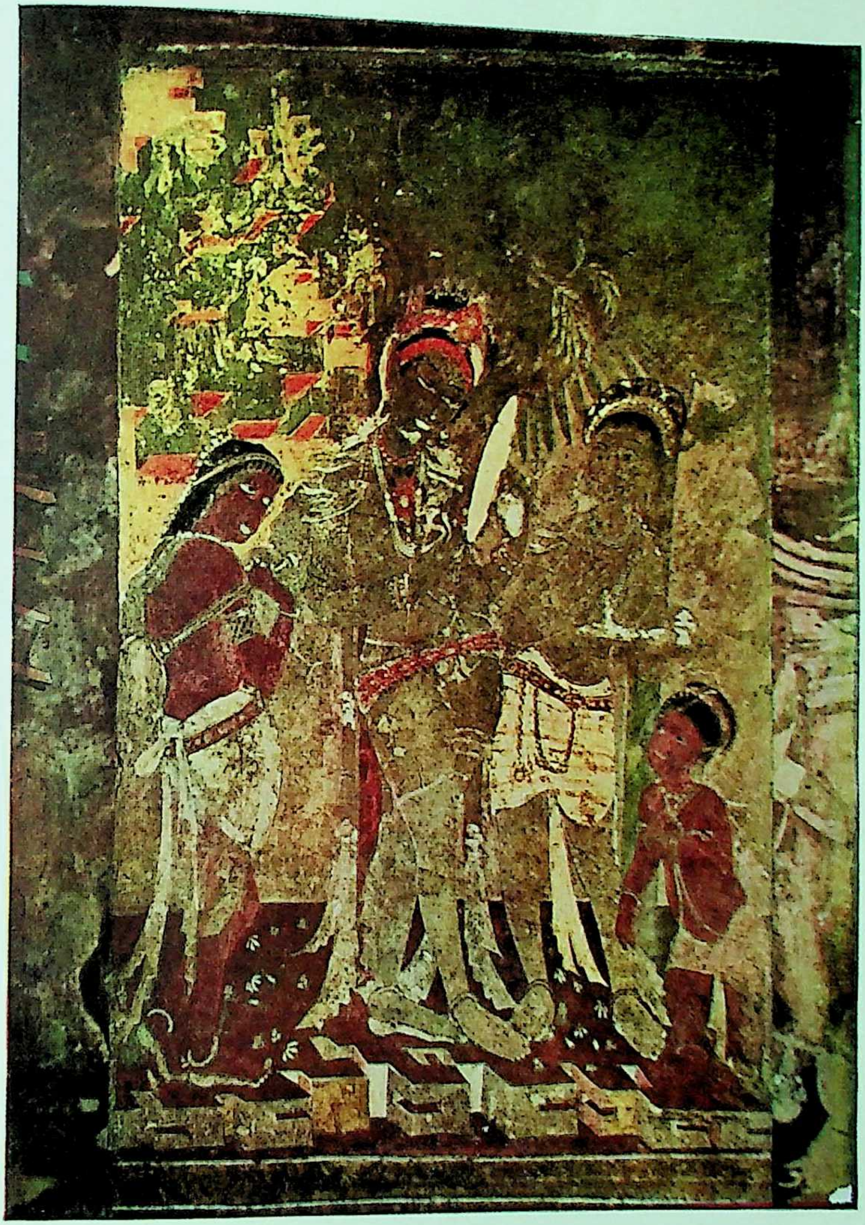
PLATE VII

Toilet Scene: Cave XVII



Toilet Scene: Cave XVII

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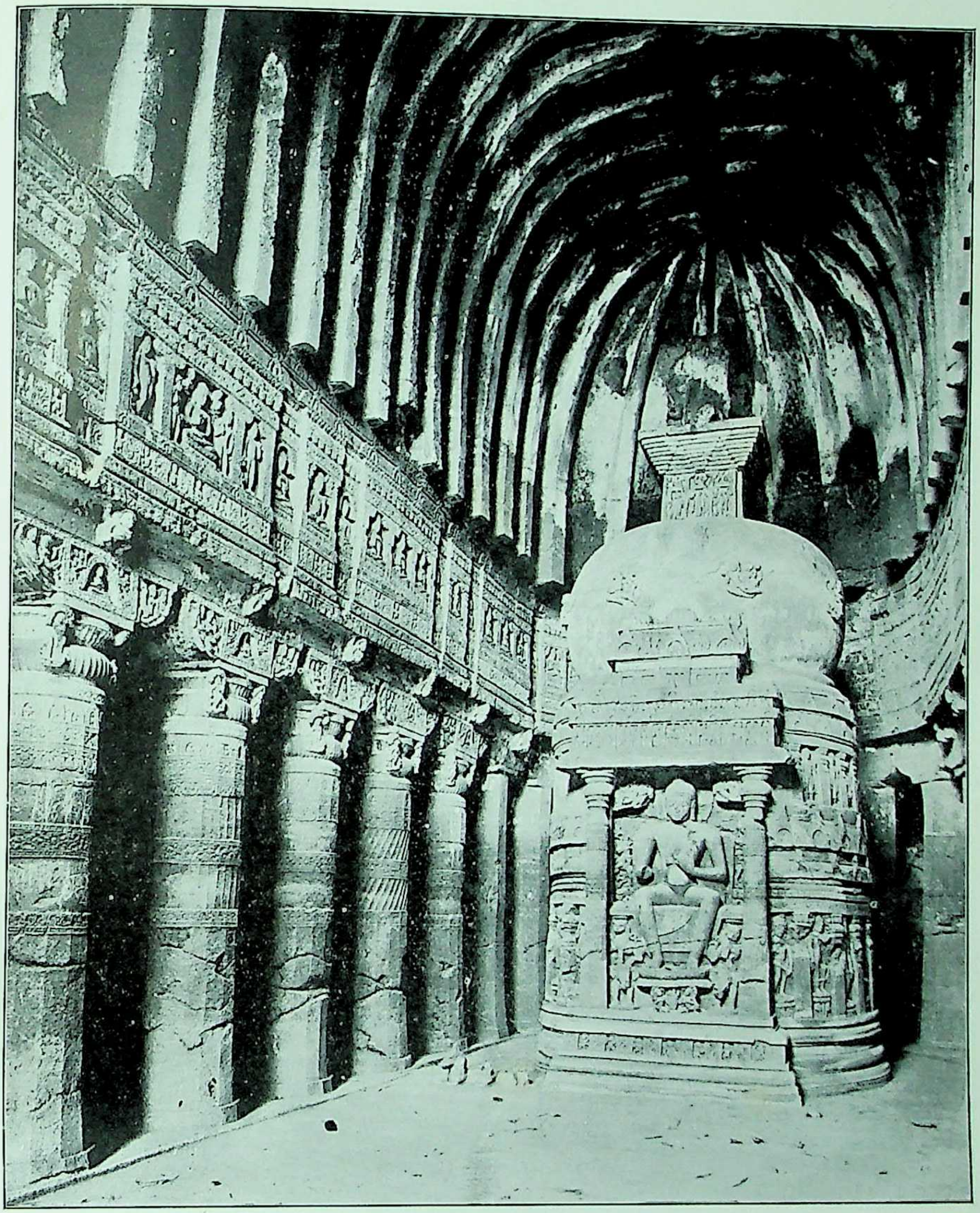

Cave XXVI : Interior